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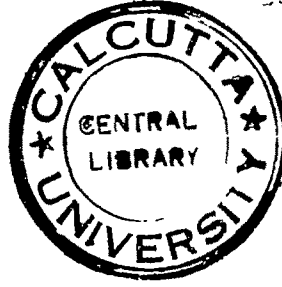
Studies in the Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa

Ph. D. Thesis in Arts

Calcutta University

1979

SCANNED



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### Abbreviations

RV.	—	R̥gveda.
AV.	—	Atharvaveda.
A. Br.	}	— Aitareya Brāhmaṇa.
Ait. Br.		
K. Br.	—	Kauṣītaki Brāhmaṇa.
G. Br.	—	Gopatha Brāhmaṇa.
Jai. Br.	}	— Jaiminiya Brāhmaṇa.
J. Br.		
P. Br.	—	Pañcaviṃśa Brāhmaṇa.
S. Br.	}	— Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa.
Śat. Br.		
Tai. Br.	}	— Taittirīya Brāhmaṇa.
T. Br.		
Āśv. Gr.	—	Āśvalāyana Gr̥hya Sūtra.
MBH	—	Mahābhārata.
Nir.	—	Nirukta.
ABORI	—	Annals of Bhandarkar Oriental Research Institute.
AIOC	—	All India Oriental Conference.
ERE	—	Encyclopaedia of Religion and Ethics.
HOS	—	Harvard Oriental Series.
IC	—	Indian Culture.
IHQ	—	Indian Historical Quarterly.
JUB	—	Journal of the Bombay University
JRAS	—	Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society.

Abbreviations (contd.)

RPVU	— Religion and Philosophy of the Veda and the Upaniṣad.
SBE	— Sacred Books of the East.
VIJ	— Viśveśvarānanda Indological Journal.

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## P r e f a c e

The present discourse is an attempt at a critical and analytical study about the different aspects of the Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa of the Śukla Yajurveda. The Veda as a whole, is said to be the fountain-source of ancient Indian culture and civilisation. The Vedic literature abounds in facts which throw sufficient light on the chequered history of the glorious past. In connection with the Vedic tradition, next to the Saṃhitās, the Brāhmaṇa as a genre of literature, represents the second phase of Vedic culture during the period when the Aryan intruders have already become settled to the Indian soil. In the wide range of this literature, the Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa stands in particular as an important landmark of information. By reason of its wide extent and varied content, it gives us abundant data of diverse, incidental interest, associated with its main theme which is admittedly concerned with sacrifice as a dominating cult. This important ancient text has already drawn the attention of scholars and we have from Julius Eggling translation of the text into English with important notes, and some papers of interest on topics in fragments by scholars in our country and abroad. But to my knowledge and belief, no well-nigh comprehensive or a systematic study of the Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa seems to have been made as yet. There is scope for such study and my thesis is one such humble attempt in this regard.

The present study consists of six chapters. The first chapter introduces discussion on the import of the term Brāhmaṇa from both the standpoint of oriental and occidental scholars, together with a brief account of its characteristics and its importance.

The second chapter represents a very brief survey of some important Brāhmaṇas just to show by way of comparison and contrast the nature and the characteristics of the Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa, involving discussion about the question of its date and authorship.

The third chapter is dedicated to the task of elucidating the religious aspect in its reference to sacrificial rituals, priestcraft and godhead. The fourth chapter deals with traits of social and economic life and patterns of its development. The fifth chapter seeks to explore the cultural facets of the society, together with political norms and ideals, as can be gathered in the light of the Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa. In the sixth chapter, an attempt has been made for an assessment of literary merit and linguistic peculiarities of the text. The study has ended with a few concluding remarks and a bibliography appended therewith.

In preparing this thesis, all available works connected with the topic, have been consulted and utilised as far as possible. Relevant texts have been quoted with

translation and their sources indicated in the body or in the foot-notes. In the treatment of this subject as a whole, the study has been pursued more or less on objective stand-point. The views of commentators or of western scholars have also been examined wherever necessary. On the whole, the present author has taken every care to make her study a systematic and comprehensive treatment.

Before I close this preface, I like to acknowledge my deep debt of gratitude to my esteemed teacher Dr. Krishnagopal Goswami, M.A., P.R.S., Ph.D., F.R.A.S. (London), ex-Asutosh Professor and Head of the Department of Sanskrit, Calcutta University, under whose kind guidance and valuable assistance the present thesis has been prepared. Next I place on record my indebtedness to Dr. Herambanath Chatterjee (Sastri), Professor and Head of the Department of Pali, Sanskrit College, Calcutta, who encouraged me with inspiration and some useful suggestions. I convey my gratefulness also to Prof. Phanibhusan Bhattacharya, formerly Head of the Department of Sanskrit, Jogmaya Devi College and Dr. Manabendu Banerjee, my husband, who have helped and encouraged me in my studies. My sincere thanks are also due to the library-staff of all the libraries where I could borrow the books from.

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## CHAPTER I

### General Introduction on the nature of the Brāhmaṇa Literature.

#### I

According to the orthodox school of thought, the word veda conveys a meaning which is associated with something holy and sacred. It is derived from the root  $\sqrt{\text{vid}}$  'to know' and the import of it is knowledge, par excellence. Greek language has a word 'oída' which letter by letter is the same word as the Sanskrit 'Veda'.<sup>1</sup> Sāyaṇa, in his gloss

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1. Cf. Max Muller / Physical Religion, p. 56.

The term 'Veda' in the sense of 'knowledge' or 'knowledge par excellence' (i.e. Veda <  $\sqrt{\text{vid}}$  'to know') is rarely found in the original Vedic texts. The word is however, found in older texts both as ādyudātta and as antodātta but with a different meaning. In the R.V. the word is found once as having accent on the first syllable and Sāyaṇa has explained the word there as vedādhyaṇa (study of the sacred texts). The word having accent on the last syllable is however, found in the Yajurveda and the Atharvaveda. Pāṇini also has accordingly read the word twice — in the uñchādigaṇa (6/1/160) and in the vr̥ṣādigaṇa (6/1/203).

The other sense in which the word is more frequent in older texts is associated with  $\sqrt{\text{vid}}$  'to gain'. In the Taittirīya Saṁhitā the word is derived as follows — vedena vai devā asurānāṁ vittam vedyamavindanta tadvedasya vedatvam (1/4/20). In the Taittirīya Brāhmaṇa we find — vedir vedebhyo nilāyata / tam vedenānvavindan / (3/3/9/69). In both these cases the word 'veda' is used in the sense of 'darbha grass' used in sacrifices. The word is also found mostly in the Brāhmaṇas with the later sense of 'works which come under the title 'veda'. Cf. etāvān vai sarvo yajño yāvāneṣa traṇo vedāḥ / S. Br. V. 5, 5, 10. Sa yām yāyamāno vācamavadat sa

contd. ....

on the R̥gveda quotes a verse<sup>2</sup> attributed to Yājñavalkya who is supposed to accept the meaning of the term Veda as knowledge. What he means to say is that through the Veda one may attain supreme knowledge which is beyond the range of perception and inference. Whatever that may be, the term is now used to represent a class of literature or a group of works, which contain such knowledge. In his introduction to the commentary on the Aitareya Brāhmaṇa, Sāyaṇa himself speaks of the Veda as the text which communicates to us the supra-normal means of attaining what is desirable and avoiding what is undesirable.<sup>3</sup> The writers on Dharma-sāstra accord to the Veda the highest authority regarding Dharma. What they argue is that for the ascertainment of Dharma, one must look to the Veda first. Thus we have the statement of Gautama that 'veda is the fountain-head of all religious duties'<sup>4</sup> or of Baudhāyana<sup>5</sup> that 'religious duties are enjoined in each Vedic text'. In later times Manu too<sup>6</sup> regards the Veda as the repository of all religious duties.

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eva trayo vedo'bhavat / Jai. Br. III/380. tadāhuḥ kiṃ tatsaṅga-sram / itīme lokā ime vedā atho vāgiti brūyāt / Ait.Br.VI.15, etc.

2. pratyakṣeṇā-numityā vā yastūpāyo na vidyate /  
enaṃ vidānti vedena tasmād vedasya vedatā.

3. iṣṭaprapṛptiā niṣṭāparihārayor alaukikam upāyaṃ yo  
grantho vedāyati sa vedah // Aitareya Brāhmaṇa (Ānandāśramagranthā  
vali, Book 32). Also Sāyaṇa in his Taittirīya-Saṃhitā-Bhāṣya-  
bhūmikā, p.3.

4 vedo dharmamūlam / Gautama-Dharmasūtra, 1. 1. 1.

5 upadiṣṭo dharmah prativēdam / Baudhāyana Śrautasūtra,  
1.1.1.

6 vedo'khilo dharmamūlam / Manusāṃhitā, II/6.

Now the term *veda*, when it signifies sacred works, comprises two principal parts — Mantra and Brāhmaṇa. Āpastamba says in his *Paribhāṣā-sūtra* — 'mantrabrāhmaṇayor vedanāmadheyam' i.e. 'Veda is the name given to Mantra and Brāhmaṇa'.<sup>7</sup>

Śābarasvāmin in his *Pūrva-mīmāṃsā* system declares that 'the Veda consists of Mantras and Brāhmaṇas'.<sup>8</sup> Sāyaṇa also in his introduction to his commentary on the *R̥gveda*, remarks — 'Veda refers to the whole literature, made up of Mantra and Brāhmaṇa jointly'.<sup>9</sup> Of them, Mantra is the main bulk of the Vedic tree and the lay man generally takes by the word 'Veda' its mantra portion only. But the Brāhmaṇa also forms a considerable portion of the Veda and while dealing with the ritualistic details, it enumerates the application and significance of the mantras. Besides these two parts enumerated by ancient Vedic scholars, the term Veda now includes another class of works viz. the *Āranyakas* and the *Upaniṣads*. These works though sometimes regarded as supplementary to and therefore included in the Brāhmaṇas themselves, yet may be considered also as independent works,<sup>10</sup> as they interpret the philosophical aspects of the Aryan minds.

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7. Āpastambha *Vajñaparibhāṣā-sūtra*, 1/34; also — *Satyāśāḍha-śānta-sūtra*, 1.1.7; *Kātyāyana Paribhāṣāsūtra*, 1.9.

8. *mantrāsca brāhmaṇaṃ ca vedāḥ* / Śābarabhāṣya on *Jaimini*, 2, 1. 33.

9. *mantra-brāhmaṇātma-śābdarāśir vedāḥ* / Sāyaṇa in *R̥gbhāṣyopakramaṇikā*, p. 14.

10. It is noteworthy that the ancient Vedic scholars have not recognised the *Āranyakas* and *Upaniṣads* as a distinct

It is difficult to give the exact definition of the term Mantra and Brāhmaṇa. The theologians try to argue in such a round-about way — "the Veda or the Revealed knowledge consists of Mantras and Brāhmaṇas; so what of the revealed knowledge is not Brāhmaṇam is the Mantra, and what is no Mantra, must be Brāhmaṇam.<sup>11</sup> But such a definition

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category while enumerating the constituent parts of the Veda and probably included them under the general term Brāhmaṇa. Really speaking, there is not only occasional overlapping of the subject-matter among these texts, but also the broad distinction between Brāhmaṇa, Āraṇyaka and Upaniṣad is by no means always correctly observed. Thus among the Aitareyins the matter of the Brāhmaṇa extends into the Āraṇyaka, while with the Taittirīyakas the close of the Brāhmaṇa and the beginning of the Āraṇyaka agree throughout and the dividing line is entirely arbitrary. The Upaniṣad is the later portion of the Āraṇyaka and sometimes is included in it. Yet, while discussing the denotation of the term 'Veda', we are prone to take them separately as forming a distinct category. A critical study would reveal that the Āraṇyakas as well as the Upaniṣads mark an advance on the ritualistic doctrines of the Brāhmaṇas. The contents of the Āraṇyakas and the Upaniṣads seem to favour this view. Thus the Āraṇyakas consist mainly of all kinds of explanations of the ritual and allegorical speculations therein. This is nothing but an advance towards knowledge in preference to the actual sacrificial observances, the formalities of which were already becoming unpopular. With a further development the Āraṇyakas form a natural transition to the speculations of the Upaniṣads which are the limitations of a formal cult. There is nothing incongruous in the supposition that in the course of time the general interest would transfer from the ritualistic method of treatment to the allegorical and from that again to the philosophical. There seems also nothing incongruous in the conclusion that these three streams taken together with the original mantra portion form a complete whole of the ancient

contd ....

cannot be appropriate as it fails to bring out definitely the real signifidance of the two terms and their distinction. We may, however, attempt to determine the specific scopes, of these two terms. The word 'mantra' comes from the root  $\sqrt{\text{man}}$  (to know, to conveive) and Yāska gives the etymology as 'mantrāḥ mananāt (Nirukta, 7/12/1) i.e. the mantras are the thoughtful literary productions of the Aryan minds. Skanda-svāmin comments on this that they are mantras because they are conceivable ('mantavyā hi te'). Durgācārya in his commentary remarks that "tebhyo'dhyātmādhidaivā-dhiyajñādimantāro manyante tadeṣāṃ mantratvam" i.e. the mantras are those which give us knowledge about the super-sensual, the supernatural and the supra-sacrificial matters. But in this sense the mantras will include the Brāhmaṇas also. The Mīmāṃsakas like to take the Veda as 'kriyārtha' and so they give the definition of 'mantra' as "taṣṭodakeṣu mantrākhyā"<sup>12</sup> i.e. the name mantra is given to the sacred precepts or ordinances. But with reference to the existing bulk of mantras the definition seems to be incomplete and Śābarasvāmin

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'sacred wisdom' called the Veda.

11. Mantrasca brāhmaṇāṇ ceti dvau bhāgau tena mantrataḥ /  
 anyadbrahmaṇam ity-etadbhavedbrāhmaṇalakṣaṇam // ..... tasmān  
 mantrabrāhmaṇavyatirikta-vedabhāgā-bhāvat mantravyatiriktaṃ  
 brāhmaṇa-mityetallakṣaṇaṃ susthitam.

— Sāyaṇa in his preface to the commentary on the Aitareya Brāhmaṇa.

12. Mīmāṃsādarsana, 2/1/32.



in his famous commentary has also admitted that — "prāyikam idaṁ lakṣaṇam anabhidhāyakā api kecit mantra ity-ucyante, yathā vasantāya kapiñjalānālabhate iti" (Commentary on the sūtra 2/1/32). According to him, mantras may be what we understand by the three sacred revealed texts, namely the R.K., the Sāman and the Yajus.<sup>13</sup> Sāyana, too, follows the footsteps of the great Mīmāṃsakas and concludes in his Introduction to the Rgbhāṣya that a text is to be designated either a Mantra or a Brāhmaṇa accordingly as it is called by the traditionists — tasmin vede keśucida-bhidhāyakesu vākyesu mantra iti samākhyā sampradāyavidbhiḥ vyavahriyate-mantrāṇa adhīmaha iti / p.37. Traditionally, however, Mantra signifies that portion of the Veda where prayers to and incantations of Gods are the main objects of the Vedic seers, together with sacrificial formulae and blessings and curses pronounced by the priests. This term with its Rgvedic significance was also common in the Zend-Avesta, the sacred book of the Iranians, in the form of 'manthra' and this fact proves its antiquity. But the term 'Brāhmaṇam' is not found there and so it must be of later origin.

The mantra portion is arranged in mainly three Saṁhitās or collections viz. R.K., Sāma and Yajus which are sometimes collectively called Trayī. Among these three

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13. asti vede mantrasābdo yasyāyamārthaḥ parikṣitaḥ 'ahe budhniya mantram me gopāya yamṛṣayastrayīvidā viduḥ rcaḥ Sāmani yajūṁsi iti / — Sābara-bhāṣya on the rule - taccodakeṣu mantrākhyā (Mīmāṃsādarsānam, 2/1/32).

the R.K.-Saṁhitā which is a collection of prayers and invocations in metrical form is the most ancient and the most original. The Sāma-veda-Saṁhitā is a collection of hymns, mostly the R.K. mantras only with the difference that they can be sung to a tune. The Yajurveda-Saṁhitā contains mostly sacrificial formulae in prose and has two divergent texts, viz. (1) the Saṁhitā of the Black Yajurveda (Kṛṣṇa-Yajurveda) and (2) the Saṁhitā of the White Yajurveda (Śukla Yajurveda). There is a fourth Saṁhitā viz. the Atharvaveda-Saṁhitā which is a collection of both prose and metrical pieces. It is said to be a later production than the R.K.-Saṁhitā<sup>14</sup> and the hymns collected here are not directly connected with any of the great sacrifices.

## II

Each of these Saṁhitās has attached with it one or more works known as the 'Brāhmaṇas'. A general definition of what the Brāhmaṇa-works as a class are, is wanting and both the author of the Pūrvamīmāṃsā and Sāyaṇācārya, the renowned commentator, take it as an integral part of the Veda and say that leaving aside the Mantra-portion what remains is the Brāhmaṇa.<sup>15</sup> But this definition is neither exact nor exhaustive as it fails to bring out the full connotation of the term.

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14. Cf. M. Winternitz / A. History of Indian Literature, Vol. I, p. 107.

15. Śeṣe Brāhmaṇasābdah / — Mīmāṃsādarśanam, 2/1/33. Also Sāyaṇa in Rgbhāṣyopakramanikā (p. 37); mantrasca brāhmaṇānceti dvau bhāgaḥ .... etc. (See Foot Note No. 14).

The difficulty of giving a correct definition of 'Brāhmaṇa' was felt by both the Indian and the Western critics. The word 'Brāhmaṇa' is generally derived from the word 'Brahman'. Already in the Ṛ.V. the word 'Brahman' has been used both as neuter and as masculine. In the neuter it signifies 'prayer',<sup>16</sup> and gradually the sense of 'sacred text', a text which contains such prayers was attached to it. 'Brahman' in the masculine means, however, the man who composes or repeats a prayer, the priest<sup>17</sup> and gradually the superintending priest i.e. Brahman by profession.<sup>18</sup> Now, derived from the word 'Brahman' in the neuter gender the term Brāhmaṇa may signify a class of works connected with the prayers. But the widely accepted view is that the word 'Brāhmaṇa' is connected with the term 'Brahman' in the masculine gender in the sense of priests in general and in this sense the Brāhmaṇas may be understood as theological tracts, comprising partly the knowledge about the elaborate system of sacrifices which had grown up among the Brāhmaṇas and partly the traditions and customs of the people. Or the

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16. Ṛ.V. VI.75,19: *devāstaṃ sarve dhūrvantu brahma*  
*varma mamāntaram /*  
 Ṛ.V. X. 105, 8: *nābrahmā yaज्ञो रधगजोति त्वे /*  
 ('brahma' parivṛdham stotram — Sāyana).

17. Ṛ.V. I. 80. 1: *itthā hi soma inmade brahmā cakāra*  
*vardhanam /*  
 Ṛ.V. X. 125, 5: *yaṃ kāmāye taṃ tamugraṃ kṛṇomi taṃ brahmāṇaṃ*  
*tamsintāṃ sumedhām //*

18. Ṛ.V. II.1, 2 (X. 91, 10) : *tava prasāstaṃ tvamadhva-*  
*rīyasi brahmā cāsi gṛhapatisca no dame //*  
 Ṛ.V. X. 52, 2: *aharahaṃśvinādhvaryavam vāṃ brahmā samidbhavati*  
*sāhutirvām //*

word 'Brahman' may mean a special class of superintending priests called 'Brahmā' and then Brāhmaṇa may be interpreted as the manual or book of 'Brahman'. It should be remembered that besides the three classes of priests there was a fourth class, the Brahmā or the superintending priest, who had no specific duty in the sacrifice but who was to watch over the progress of the sacrifice and to see that everything in the sacrificial performance was done correctly and in proper order. For that purpose he had to be versed in all the three Vedas.<sup>19</sup> Most of the western scholars like to accept this derivation of the word 'Brāhmaṇa' from the term 'Brahman' in the masculine, whether meaning the priest-in-general or the superintending priest, because they argue that the subject-matter of the Brāhmaṇa-works include mainly the discussions and explanations of the learned priests upon the sacrificial system and in those cases also, where they describe some legends, myths or narratives, these have certainly a distant reference to the sacrificial cult. This connection between Brahman and 'Brāhmaṇa' is also recognised in the Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa which identifies the two terms: 'brahma vai brāhmaṇaḥ',<sup>20</sup> Patañjali also, in his Mahābhāṣya observes that 'Brahman' and 'Brāhmaṇa' are synonymous terms: 'Samānārtthāvetau brahman-sābdo brāhmaṇasābdaś ca'.<sup>21</sup> It appears therefore that the term Brāhmaṇa originally meaning

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19. Sarvair brahmā / Āpastambha Paribhāṣā-sūtra, 1/21.

20. Brahma Vai brāhmaṇaḥ kṣatraṃ rājanyaḥ / Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa, XIII. 1, 5, 3.

21. Patañjali's Mahābhāṣya - 5. 1, 1, edited by F. Kielhorn, 1970.

'the priestly class' came to signify later 'the utterances of the Brāhmaṇa-priests versed in the performance of sacrificial details.

The famous western scholars like Max Müller, Martin Haug, Winternitz and Julius Eggeling mostly agree on this point that the term Brāhmaṇa has a direct connection with 'Brahman' — be it in the sense of priests-in-general or a special kind of priest named Brahman. Thus to quote the words of Max Müller — "The name Brāhmaṇa was derived either from brahman, neuter, meaning the clergy or priesthood (just as Kṣatram means nobility) or directly from brahman, nominative, brahmā, masculine, the priest and more specially the superintending priest. .... These Brāhmaṇas could hardly have been so called except because they were the books of the Brahman, neuter, the clergy in general, or of the Brahman, masculine, the superintending priest."<sup>22</sup>

Dr. Martin Haug has also tried to derive the term Brāhmaṇam from Brahman which may be identified with the Brahmā priest who was supposed to know all the Vedas so as to superintend the sacrificial performances. Thus observes he — "The most eminent of this class of priests laid down rules for the proper performance of sacrificial rites, explained them and defended their own opinions on such topics against those of their antagonists; incidentally, he made speculations on other matters such as on this world and salvation. The dictum of such a Brahmā priest who

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22. Physical Religion, p. 75. London, 1891.

passed as a great authority was called a Brāhmaṇam. .... Afterwards the term Brāhmaṇam which originally signified only a single dictum was applied to the whole collection."<sup>23</sup> Prof. Winternitz also takes the term Brāhmaṇa to mean first "a single explanation or utterance of a learned priest, of a doctor of the science of sacrifice, upon any priest of the ritual. Used collectively, the word means, secondly, a collection of such utterances and discussions of the priests upon the science of sacrifice. For although the Brāhmaṇas fortunately contain much that has only a distant reference to the sacrificial cult, for instance, cosmogonic myths, ancient legends and narratives, yet the sacrifice is the one and only theme from which all the discussions starts, on which everything hinges."<sup>24</sup> Similarly, Julius Eggeling in the introduction to his translation of the Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa has discussed the origin of the Brāhmaṇas thus: "They are essentially digests of a floating mass of single discourses or dicta on various points of the ceremonial of worship, ascribed to individual teachers, and handed down orally in the theological schools. Single discourses of this kind were called 'brāhmaṇa' — probably either because they were intended for the instruction and guidance of priests (brahman) generally; or because they were, for the most part, the authoritative utterances of such as were thoroughly versed in Vedic and sacrificial lore and competent

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23. Introduction to the translation of the Aitareya Brāhmaṇa, pp. 5-6.

24. A History of Indian literature, Vol.I, pt. I, p. 164.

to act as Brāhmanas or Superintending priests. In later times, a collection or digest of such detached pieces came to be likewise called a 'Brāhmaṇa'.<sup>25</sup>

Now, it would appear from the various speculations of the most renowned scholars that the rule enjoining the performance of a particular rite or the authoritative opinion on a particular point of sacrificial theology forms what we mean by the term 'Brāhmaṇam'. The majority of these scholars have connected the word 'Brāhmaṇa' with the term 'brahman' in the masculine which has the significance of priesthood and naturally 'Brāhmaṇa' becomes a type of the manual of prominent priests dealing with their own business viz. the sacrificial performance. But the explanation given by the Western Orientalists aims at bringing out the general nature of the contents of the Brāhmaṇas, and fails to give a suitable definition of this type of works which at the same time will attempt to fix the exact meaning of the term. Although there is hardly any dis-agreement as regards the nature of the contents of these works, there are scholars who have tried to explain the term in a different sense. It has been already mentioned that besides the term brahman in the masculine, there is also a term brahman in the neuter. The etymology of this word is not certain and so it is not easy to determine the original

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25. Introduction to Eggeling's translation of the Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa, Vol. XII, Pt. I, in the series "The Sacred Books of the East", pp. Xxii-xxiii.

meaning of the term. But in the R.V., the word is often used with the meaning of 'prayer' or 'hymn'. Dr. J. Muir says in his Original Sanskrit Texts:<sup>26</sup> "The R̥sis called their hymns by various names . . . and they also applied to them the appellation of brahma in numerous passages." He further says that "that in these passages brahma has generally the sense of hymn or prayer is clear from the context of some of them, where brahma is joined with the verb gāyata . . . as well as from the fact that the poets are said to have fashioned or generated it, in the same way as they are said to have fashioned or generated hymns in other texts." Several R̥gvedic passages may be quoted here to show that brahman (neut.) was frequently used by the R̥sis in the sense of hymn or prayer — I. 3.5 — Receive the prayers (brahmāṇi) of the sacrificer; I. 24. 11 — Beseeching thee with prayers (brahmāṇi), I ask it of thee; I. 52. 7 — O Indra, like waves into a lake the hymns (brahmāṇi) magnifying thy glory reach unto thee; also II. 34. 6; II. 39, 8; III. 51, 6; IV. 6, 11; VI. 69, 7; VII. 35, 7; VIII. 32, 27; X. 54, 6; X. 61, 1 — to cite only a very few instances. Now, we may quite reasonably derive the term 'Brāhmaṇa' from this original word. If we derive Brāhmaṇa from this neuter term, then Brāhmaṇa would originally mean "works containing explanations of 'Brahman' or Vedic prayers or mantras." In the absence of any undisputably accepted definition of the Brāhmaṇa, we may take

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26. Original Sanskrit Texts, Vol. II, p.241.



this definition as the most possible one. The majority of the mantras, no doubt, were originally the spontaneous outburst of the poetic hearts of the Vedic seers, but soon speculations began to grow regarding their significance and application in sacrificial performances. Already in the Saṁhitā-period, we come across speculations on the nature and importance of sacrificial rites and other connected topics of cosmogonic and mystical character which later form the proper subject-matter of the Brāhmaṇas. The explanatory character of the Brāhmaṇa-works is accepted also by Mr. Martin Haug who says that the term 'brāhmaṇam' signifies "a kind of theological, philosophical, grammatical, etymological and metrical speculations on the mantras and the sacrifices."<sup>27</sup>

The ancient Vedic ācāryas also have sometimes indicated that the Brāhmaṇas have the character of interpretations of the mantras.

Kātyāyana in his Yajuh-prātisākhya has probably intended to accept the Brāhmaṇa-works as a kind of explanatory treatises or 'bhāṣyas' as is evident from the name bhāṣika-svara by which he specially means the accentuation of the Brāhmaṇas particularly of the Ś. Br.<sup>28</sup> If the Brāhmaṇa

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27. Introduction to the translation of the Aitareya Brāhmaṇa, p. 3.

28. In the first chapter of the Yajuh-prātisākhya Kātyāyana has enjoined several rules (Yajuh-prātisākhya, I. 127-130) regarding accentuation, and in that context Uvāṭa while commenting on the rule 'dvau' (I. 129) says —

works are regarded as 'bhāṣyas' only then the accentuation of the Brāhmaṇas may be termed as Bhāṣita or Bhāṣika. Sāyaṇa also in his introduction to the commentary on the Taittirīya-Saṁhitā specifically speaks of the Brāhmaṇas as expositions<sup>29</sup> of the Mantras.

Even the Brāhmaṇas themselves reveal their explanatory character. In most of the older Brāhmaṇas where we have rules for the ritual application of a mantra, we find first the mention of the mantra either in full or in symbol and then the explanation of difficult words in the mantra and the significance of them in the prescribed rite. Thus to cite an instance from the Aitareya Brāhmaṇa of the R̥gveda — eight mantras are enjoined to be recited by the Hotā after the purchase of the Soma; there the Brāhmaṇa prescribed the first ṛk as — "bhadṛādabhi śreyah prehī-tyanvāha" (III. 2). After that the Brāhmaṇa itself mentions<sup>30</sup> the ṛk line by line and explains its significance. Similarly

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"dvau svarāṇvudāttānūdāttau bhāṣitalakṣitau śātapathabrāhmaṇe āhuḥ" / Again in the later portion of his Prātisākhya named as the Bhāṣika-pariśiṣṭa-sūtra Kātyāyana has mentioned in details the different rules (beginning with atha brāhmaṇasvara-saṁskāranīyamah . . . . .) regarding the Bhāṣikasvara. And that the accentuation of the Brāhmaṇas is mentioned as the Bhāṣika-svara is also supported by the remark made upon the commentary of Ūvaṭa-kāṇṭhakūṇḍapāṭhitānāmapī brāhmaṇabhāgā-nāmasvastūpara ityādīnāṁ traisvāryameva; brāhmaṇakāṇḍapāṭhitānāṁ viśve devāḥ śvostanamapathehetyādīnāṁ bhāṣikasvara eveti".

29. brāhmaṇasya mantravyākhyānarūpatvāt mantrā evādaḥ samāmnātāḥ / - Sāyaṇa in Taittirīya-Saṁhitā-bhāṣya-bhūmikā, p. 7.

30. Thus — ayaṁ vāva loko bhadrastasmāḍasāveva lokah śreyān svargam eva tallokaṁ yajamānaṁ gamayati --this is the

the mantra "iṣe tvorje tvā vāyava stka devo vah savitā prārpayatu śreṣṭhatamāya karmaṇe" is found at the beginning of both the Śukla and the Kṛṣṇa-Yajuh-Samhitās and the Brāhmanas of the Śukla and Kṛṣṇa Yajuh begin with the explanation of this mantra.

The same thing has been hinted at by Jaimini also. Thus in his aphorism on Mīmāṃsā, he, while establishing the conclusion that the mantras are not without senses, frames the rule — Vidhisābdācca (I. 2. 53), upon which Śābara-svāmin comments — "vidhisābdāsca vivakṣi-tārthāneva mantrān anuvadanti, śatam himaḥ śatam varṣāṇi jīvyāsamitye-tadēvāha iti." Sāyaṇa clears the meaning in his Rgbhāṣya-bhūmikā<sup>31</sup>: "mantravyākhyānarūpo brāhmaṇagataḥ śabdo vidhisābda iti ucyate. sa caivam āmnāyate — 'śatam himaḥ śatam varṣāṇi jīvyāḥ sma ityeva etadāha (Śat. Brāh. 2/3/4/21) iti. tatra 'śatam himaḥ' ityetaḥ vyākhyeyamantrasya pratīkam, avasīṣṭam tu tasya tātparyavyākhyānam."

That the Brāhmanas are on the whole liturgical explanations of the mantras is also admitted by another old first line with its explanation;

brhaspatiḥ purā etā te astviti brahma vai brhaspatir-brahmaivāsmā etat purogavamakarna vai brahmaṇvadriṣyati — this is the significance of the second line;

athemavasya vara ā prthivyā iti devayajanaṁ vai varam prthivyai devayajna evainam tadavasāyayatyāre śatrūn kṛṇuhi sarvavīra iti dviṣantamevāsmā tat pāpmānaṁ bhrātrvya-mapavādhathe 'dharam pādayati — these are the explanations of the third and fourth lines.

31. Rgbhāṣyopakramanikā, p. 24.

ācārya, namely, Bhaṭṭa Bhāskara, who in his Bhāṣya on Taittirīya Saṁhitā (1. 5. 1) says — "brāhmaṇam nāma karmanastan-mantrāṇām ca vyākhyānagranthaḥ."<sup>32</sup>

The Brāhmaṇa-works themselves sometimes use the word brāhmaṇam in the sense of the exposition of 'brahman' (mantra). Thus the Aitareya Brāhmaṇa suggests this meaning of the term brāhmaṇam when it gives the expression — tasyoktaṁ brāhmaṇam (VII. 2).<sup>33</sup> In the Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa also, specially in its thirteenth book, we frequently come across the expression tasyoktaṁ brāhmaṇam with the same significance. Accordingly, Prof. Weber has pointed out that this phrase is used "in cases where the dogmatic explanation of a ceremonial or other precepts has already been given."<sup>34</sup> Similar significance is also suggested by P.D. Gune when he says that "A Brāhmaṇa does not quote another Brāhmaṇa. Words like 'tasyoktaṁ brāhmaṇam' . . . do not refer to Brāhmaṇa in the sense of a theological work."<sup>35</sup>

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32. Kṛṣṇayajurvedīya-Taittirīya-Saṁhitā with the commentaries of Bhaṭṭa Bhāskara Miśra and Sāyaṇācārya, ed. by N.S. Sontakke & T.N. Dharmadhikari, Poona, Vaidika Samsodhana Mandala, Pt. II, p.

33. Sāyaṇa in his commentary has explained the phrase as follows — "tasya ca gaurīvīta-nāmaḥ sūktasya brāhmaṇam tadvā etad ya.jamānajananam" ityādinā pūrvam evoktam", i.e. the exposition of the Gaurīvīti hymn has already been told in another context (Ait. Br. IV. 19).

34. History of Indian Literature / A. Weber, p.11, Foot Note.

35. Brāhmaṇa quotations in the Nirukta, Commemorative Essays presented to R.G. Bhandarkar, pp. 52-53.

Nature and scope of the Brāhmanas :

Thus the original character of the Brāhmanas as explanatory treatises being established, we may now proceed to think over the nature and scope of these works as we get them now. Āpastamba says in his Paribhāṣā-sūtra (I.35) — karmacodanā brāhmanāni. The term karmacodanā is synonymous with vidhi.<sup>36</sup> According to Sāyaṇa, vidhi is of two types — 'apavṛttapavartanam' (that which induces an indifferent one to act) and 'ajñātajñāpanam' (that which gives us knowledge about something hitherto unknown). Thus the text "āgnāvaiṣṇavam puroḍāśam nirvapanti dīkṣaṇīyāyām" falls in the first category and the texts like "ātmā vā idameka evā-

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That the word is used in the Vedic texts in a technical sense and not in the sense of a complete work is evident from other references also. Thus in the Taittirīya Brāhmaṇa we find the term Brāhmaṇam used to signify some prescription which has already been made about a particular procedure — "This Brāhmaṇa is to be considered in the Paśubandha and not in other Yajñas", (veditṛtīye yajeta / . . . . taḍ etat paśubandhe brāhmaṇam brūyāt / netareṣu yajñeṣu / Tai. Br., 8, 12, 5, 10), "This is the Brāhmaṇa in Sāvitra and also in Nāciketa" (etadeva sāvitre brāhmaṇamatho nāciketa / T.Br., 3, 12, 5, 12). Sometimes the word is used also in the sense of a whole section as in "These paśus mentioned in the Brāhmaṇa" (ete brāhmaṇavantah paśavaḥ ālabhyante / T.Br., 1, 2, 5, 43) or in the sense of exposition of something as in "That which is the Brāhmaṇa of Gāyatrī" (yadeva gāyatrasya brāhmaṇam / P.Br., 11, 3, 2, 3) etc.

36. Dhūrtasvāmī in his commentary explains the word 'karmacodanā' as — karma codyate 'bhidhīyate yābhi stāḥ karma-codanāḥ; vāyavyam sveta-mālabhetetyevamādīnāḥ (p. 25).

gre āsīt" — go to the second.<sup>37</sup> Āpastamba further says that — brāhmanasēṣo'rthavāda (I. 36) which signifies that besides vidhi, there is also the arthavāda portion which supplements the vidhi.<sup>38</sup> The word 'sēṣa' implies 'sēṣin' and 'sēṣa sēṣibhāva' is but another name for 'aṅgāṅgibhāva' (the relation between the body and its limbs). Thus the relation between the vidhi and the arthavāda is indispensable like that between the body and its limbs. Yāska, the author of the Nirukta, has admitted the inclusion of the arthavādas in the Brāhmanas when he says — "prāśītramasyākṣiṇī nirjaghāneti ca brāhmanam." (Nir. XII. 2, 3). The Mīmāṃsakas also have accepted the arthavādas in the same rank as the vidhis because they convey the same significance as the vidhis.<sup>39</sup> Thus from the character of the contents, the Brāhmanas may be categorised under two broad heads, namely, vidhi and arthavāda. Sāyaṇa accordingly says in the Rgbhāṣyopakramaṇikā (p. 24) — dvividhaṁ brāhmanam — vidhi rarthavādas'ceti. Āpastamba has further enumerated the

37. Vidhir api dvividha, apravṛttappravartanam, ajñāta-jñāpanaṅceti, 'āgnā vaiṣṇavaṁ puroḍāśaṁ nirvapati dīkṣaṇī-yāyām ityādyāḥ karmakāṇḍagatāḥ vidhayaḥ apravṛtta-pravartakāḥ/ ātmā vā idam eka evāgra āsīt — ityādyā' brāhmakāṇḍagatā. ajñāta-jñāpakā iti. / Sāyaṇa in Rgbhāṣyopakramaṇikā, p. 25.

38. Thus the commentator Dhūrtasvāmin says — Vidheya-stutyā pratiṣiddhanindayā vidhāyakasya brāhmanasya sēṣabhūto brāhmaṇe evāntarbhūta ity arthaḥ (p. 26).

39. Vidhinā tvækaṁvākyatvāt stutyarthena vidhīnām syuḥ / Mīmāṃsādarsāna 1/2/7.

four varieties of arthavāda, such as — nindā, prasāmsā, purākalpa and parakṛti (I. 37). Śābarasvāmin, while commenting on the rule śeṣe brāhmaṇasābdah (II. 1, 33), quotes two ancient verses which give us ten topics of the Brāhmaṇa-works viz. hetu, nirvacana, nindā, prasāmsā, saṁśaya, vidhi, parakriyā, purākalpa, vyavadhāraṇa-kalpanā and upamāna.<sup>40</sup> All these are nothing but attempts of the ancient ācāryas to make an analysis of the contents of the Brāhmaṇas.

Indeed, it seems that from very ancient times difficulty was felt to speak categorically that a Brāhmaṇa contains such and such topics. The Brāhmaṇas themselves mention various topics such as purāṇa, itihāsa, gāthā, nārāśaṁsī, kalpa, etc.

Thus in the Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa we have the lines — tānupadiśatīti hāso vedah, so'yamiti kiñciditihāsamācaksītai-  
vam evādhvaryuḥ sampreṣyati, again — tān upadiśati  
purāṇam vedah . . . . etc.<sup>41</sup> The Taittirīya Āraṇyaka (II. 9.2) mentions several names besides Brāhmaṇa — 'yad brāhmaṇā-  
nīti hāsān purāṇāni kalpān gāthā nārāśaṁsīrmedāhutayah'.  
Sāyana comments on this — 'brāhmaṇāntaḥ paṭhitānāmapī  
punaruktiḥ phalātisāya dyotanārtham.' The Gopatha Brāhmaṇa

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40. hetu nirvacanaṁ nindā prasāmsā saṁśayo vidhiḥ /  
parakriyā purākalpo vyavadhāraṇakalpanā //  
upamānaṁ daśaite tu vidhayo brāhmaṇasya tu /  
etaḍ vai sarvavedeṣu nityaṁ vidhilakṣaṇam //  
— quoted in Śābarabhāṣya on the rule II. 1, 33.

41. Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa / XIII. 4, 3, 12-13.

of the Atharvaveda mentions several more topics — "ime sarve vedā nirmītāḥ, sakalpāḥ sarahasyāḥ sabrahmanāḥ sopani-  
 ṣatkāḥ setihāsāḥ sānvākhyānāḥ sapurāṇāḥ sasvarāḥ sasamśkārah  
 saniruktāḥ sānuśāsanāḥ sānumārjanāḥ savākovākyāḥ".<sup>42</sup> The  
 mention of all these names helps us to have a considerable  
 idea regarding the varieties of contents in the Brāhmaṇas  
 besides the vidhi. In their speculations the authors of  
 the Brāhmaṇas took the Vedic mantras as 'Kriyārtha' i.e.  
 sacrificial and not simply 'prasamsārtha' or glorificatory;  
 so they tried to explain their significance with a sacrificial  
 setting. In order to achieve this goal, they prescribed to  
 the minutest details, the rules and regulations for the  
 performance of different Vedic sacrifices and at the same  
 time tried to "bring out the propriety and significance of  
 these prescriptions either by aetiological devices such as  
 fantastic etymologies, references to history or mythology,  
 traditions preserved in the 'Devāsura' and other legends  
 or by a sort of inexplicable assumption of some mystic or  
 mythic correspondence between the various parts of the  
 sacrifice."<sup>43</sup> Now all these various topics of speculations  
 on matters, other than the sacrificial injunctions, were added  
 evidently sometimes later and as they are helpful to the  
 interpretation and understanding of the Vedic mantras they  
 were gradually regarded as included under the subject-matter  
 of the Brāhmaṇa-works. In a still later period, these topics

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42. Gopatha Brāhmaṇa - 1. 2. 9.

43. H.R. Karnik / Teachings of the Brāhmaṇas / Bharatiya  
 Vidya, Vol. VIII, 1952.



became the subject-matter of different branches of knowledge, such as what is called 'kalpa' became the origin of the later kalpa-sūtras, the topic named 'rahasya' became the theme of the 'Āraṇyaka' literature and so on. These topics have not the character of injunctions or 'karmacodanā' which is again synonymous with 'vidhi'; these do not form the proper 'brāhmaṇas', but they may be termed as arthavāda which were originally something like supplementary to the 'brāhmaṇas'. It is perhaps with this object in view that Āpastamba says — Brāhmaṇasēṣo'rthavādah.<sup>44</sup> Thus it appears that originally there were three portions — mantra (i.e. prayers and incantations), brāhmaṇa (explanatory treatises on the mantras) and arthavāda (those portions which contain philosophical, grammatical, etymological, mythical and metrical speculations on the mantras and the sacrifices). The following quotation from Sāyaṇa also refers to the original three-fold character of the Veda — "tadevaṁ vede vidyamānānāṁ trayāṇāṁ mantra-vidhyarthavādabhāgānāṁ aprāmāṇya-kāraṇābhāvāt bodhakānāṁ teṣāṁ prāmāṇyasya svatastvāṅgīkārāt kṛtsnasyāpi vedasya prāmāṇyaṁ siddham."<sup>45</sup> In the existing Brāhmaṇas, even in the oldest of them, we have both these portions — the brāhmaṇa and the arthavāda. The name 'Brāhmaṇa' is mainly due to the prominence of the 'brāhmaṇa' portions which is otherwise termed as karmacodanā or vidhi.

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44. Āpastamba Paribhāṣā-sūtra - 1/35.

45. R̥gvedabhāṣyopakramanikā / p. 32.

Later, a work 'anubrāhmaṇa' is mentioned in the rules of Pāṇini.<sup>46</sup> Dīkṣita, following the Kāśikā, says that an 'anubrāhmaṇa' is a work which is similar to the brāhmaṇa ('brāhmaṇasaśāśro grantho'nubrāhmaṇam').<sup>47</sup> These works were certainly written later than the Brāhmaṇa-works, but they were gradually raised to the dignity of original Vedic works. Thus the name 'anubrāhmaṇa' is often mentioned in the Nidāna-sūtras<sup>48</sup> whose Vedic character is undoubted because of their mention in Yāska's Nirukta.<sup>49</sup> Pāṇini also reads this special rule under the general rule tadadhīte tadveda (Pāṇini IV. 2. 59) which signifies a special branch of study.

#### Origin and date of the Brāhmaṇas :

The original character of the Brāhmaṇa-works indicates that they are evidently later than the Mantra-portions of the Veda. But just as the exact date of the first origin and later arrangement of the Mantras is still a point of dispute, similar is the case with the first origin and later development of the Brāhmaṇical speculations. And it is indeed difficult or rather impossible to draw a clear line of demarcation between the two periods of the Mantras and of the Brāhmaṇas. Even in the Saṃhitā-period, we sometimes find speculations on the details of sacrifices and also on topics

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46. anubrāhmaṇādiniḥ / Pāṇini's <sup>Aṅgādhyaṣṭe.</sup> 4. 2. 62.

47. Siddhānta-Kaumudī, 1272.

48. Śoḍaśino'nubrāhmaṇam / 8/3.

49. Naidānā iti / Nirukta VI. 2, 6; VII, 3, 6.

having theological, mystical and cosmogonic themes which are rather brāhmanical. Besides, the Indologists have already shown that the origin of the sacrificial art must be traced to a very early period of Indian history, to the Indo-<sup>50</sup>Iranian stage so to speak, when the Indians and the Iranians formed one nation. This historical fact proves clearly that the composition of the Mantras in many cases had already a ritualistic background which led to the growth of the actual Brāhmaṇa section.

We can also study the historical growth of the Brāhmaṇas in the Saṁhitās of the Black Yajurveda which had four recensions — the Kāthaka, the Kapiṣṭhala, the Maitrāyaṇī and the Taittirīyaka. These four works were meant for the Adhvaryu priests, the actual performers of the sacrifices, and in them the formulae used by the Adhvaryu priests are given in proper order for each sacrifice and they are accompanied by explanations and instructions in prose. That is to say, the Brāhmaṇas or theological discussions are found to be mingled with the Mantra-portion in the Saṁhitās of the Black Yajurveda. Of the four recensions of the Black Yajurveda, the Kapiṣṭhala-kātha and the Maitrāyaṇī, though they are called Saṁhitās, they would have more correctly been designated Brāhmaṇas because of their characteristics and it is an important point to note that they have no separate Brāhmaṇas besides what is called their Saṁhitās. The Taittirīyakas, however,

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50. A.B. Keith / ERE, Vol. VIII, p. 312.  
P.S. Deshmukh / Religion in Vedic Literature, p. 341.

contain two portions, one called Saṁhitā and another referred to as Brāhmaṇa. But there is hardly any distinction between the two portions, the Brāhmaṇa being in reality a continuation of the Saṁhitā. Later on, the Vājasaneyins found it necessary to separate the hymns or sacrificial formulae from the Brāhmaṇa portions. Thus in the new code of the Vājasaneyins, we get a Saṁhitā and a Brāhmaṇa, both of which were evidently guided by the same spirit. Here the Saṁhitā is nothing but a mere collection of hymns gathered together probably for the benefit of the Adhvaryu priests and originated most probably simultaneously with the Brāhmaṇa-portion, if not later. But this is not the matter in the case of the two other Saṁhitās of the Ṛ.K. and the Sāman. In these two cases, we have the collection of hymns first and then the respective Brāhmaṇa-works originated. This is probably due to the fact that the two classes of priests — the Hotṛs and the Udgātṛs had very little to do with the actual performance of the sacrifice and all their concern was with the hymns enjoined either for reciting or for singing.

It is quite clear that although the first origin of the Brāhmanical speculation can be traced to a distant past, yet the actual Brāhmaṇa period comes after the Saṁhitā-period. Among the four Saṁhitās, the Ṛ.K.-Saṁhitā is certainly the oldest one and all other works of the Vedic period pre-suppose it. Prof. Winternitz, the famous German scholar of Indology, also makes conclusion in this line, "The only certainty is that the Saṁhitā of the



Rgveda was already concluded and ~~that the hymn-poetry already concluded and~~ that the hymn-poetry already belonged to a far-distant past, when prayers and sacrifices were first made the subject of a special 'science'.<sup>51</sup> He further thinks that "it is likely that the final compilation of the Saṁhitās of the Atharvaveda and of the liturgical Saṁhitās was about contemporaneous with the beginnings of the Brāhmaṇa literature, so that the latest portions of these Saṁhitās might be of the same date as the earliest portions of the Brāhmaṇas."<sup>52</sup> And he has arrived at this conclusion on the basis of the geographical and cultural conditions as they are represented in the Saṁhitās of the Atharvaveda and the Yajurveda on the one hand, and in the Brāhmaṇas on the other hand, in comparison with those of the Rgveda. But the difficulty remains all the same regarding the exact date of the Brāhmaṇas and the opinions of scholars vary widely in this respect. In the opinion of the western scholars like Winternitz, Keith, Bloomfield, etc. the period of the origin and development of the Brāhmaṇa literature extends from 1500 B.C. to 800 B.C. Max Müller thinks that the period of the origin of the prose-works, the Brāhmaṇas,<sup>53</sup> is from 800 B. C. to 600 B. C. Indian scholars like

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51. A History of Indian Literature, Vol.I, p. 170.

52. Ibid., p. 170.

53. Max Müller in his History of Ancient Sanskrit Literature, has fixed the probable chronological limits of the Mantra period between 800 and 1000 B.C. (P.262) and regarding the Brāhmaṇa period which obviously comes after the Mantra

Tilak,<sup>54</sup> Samasrami, etc. hold the opinion that the Brāhmaṇas originated and developed between 2500-1000 B.C. On the whole, it remains difficult or rather impossible to ascertain the exact period of both the Saṁhitās and the Brāhmaṇas. Max Müller rightly observes that whether the Vedic hymns were composed in 1000, or 1500, or 2000, or 3000 B.C., no power on earth will ever determine. What the great scholar speaks of the Vedic hymns, becomes also true of the Brāhmaṇa-works.

Just as there is an intimate relation between the Yajurveda-Saṁhitā and the Brāhmaṇa-texts or in other words there is no essential difference between the two, similarly the relation between the Brāhmaṇas and the later Sūtra-works may be taken into consideration. As regards the subject-matter, they both fall in the same category; but as regards the nature of its treatment, their difference is most essential.<sup>55</sup> The Brāhmaṇas describe different sacrifices in their widest extent and whatever importance they lay on the sacrifice, sacrificial rite is not the sole aim here, as is sometimes thought. They, no doubt, describe the sacrificial ceremonies in details, but their chief aim, as their name signifies, is to unfold the divine element underlying the

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period he thinks that "it would seem impossible to bring the whole within a shorter space than 200 years." (p. 229).

54. B.G. Tilak / Orion, p. 221.

55. For a study of the relation of the Śrauta-Sūtras to the Brāhmaṇas, cf. "On the relation between Brāhmaṇas and Śrauta-Sūtras", by Nao Shiro Tsuji, Tokyo, 1952.

details of the ceremony. The subject is here 'brahma', originally the sacred prayer, the ever-growing theological wisdom which lies hidden under the entire course of the sacred ceremonials. For this reason here we have no systematic treatment on the entire system of worship, but we find here only attempts to record the entire religious consciousness which expressed itself mainly through the hierarchical practices of those days. They are in a word "not a scientifically marshalled system of tenets, but a collection of dogmas, as they result from religious practice."<sup>56</sup> Perhaps this is the reason why we sometimes find symbolical, mystical descriptions in the Brāhmaṇas.

The Sūtras, on the other hand, are "complete systems of ritual prescription". Their sole object is to represent the entire course of the sacred ceremonial system prevalent in those days with the greatest possible accuracy, as is thought to be necessary for the performance of certain rites directed towards the propitiation of gods and winning their favour. In other words, the Sūtras are meant for the establishment of certain general rules regarding the performance of sacrificial ceremonies.

The existing Sūtra-works are no doubt later than the Brāhmaṇa-works but they are not necessarily written on the model of the Brāhmaṇa-works. It is now an established

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56. Extracts from Prof. Roth's remark in his Introduction to the Nirukta, p.XXIVff., translated by J. Muir with some abridgments, in his Original Sanskrit Texts, Vol.2, p. 180.

fact that the sacrificial system has its origin in a far-gone age, and as Prof. Haug also thinks, there existed either in a written form or orally some Sūtra-like texts or some kind of ritualistic tradition which served as sources of information for the present Sūtras, perhaps sometimes also for the Brāhmaṇas.

#### Importance of the Brāhmaṇas :

No such amount of speculation is made about any branch of Vedic literature as about the real nature of the Brāhmaṇa-works and the values they possess. Scholars, both Indian and Western, ancient and modern, have dealt with these works with a mixed feeling. Although they have admitted of the importance of the Brāhmaṇas as the main source of religious information, yet they have in most cases failed to grasp the real significance of these works together with their all-round position, and often their estimation of these works has remained partial.

To begin with, we may remember Max Müller, the great Vedic scholar, who introduced Oriental Studies in the West, and who has said about the Brāhmaṇas in one of his works<sup>57</sup> : "However interesting the Brāhmaṇas may be to the students of Indian literature, they are of small interest to the general reader. The greater portion of them is

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57. Chips from the German Workshop, Vol. I, p. 116



simple twaddle and what is worse 'theological twaddle'." Even though he admits of their importance, he points out their dry and uninteresting character in clear terms: "The Brāhmanas represent no doubt a most interesting phase in history of Indian mind, but judged by themselves as literary productions, they are most disappointing . . . . The general character of these works is marked by shallow and insipid grandiloquence, by priestly conceit and antiquarian pedantry. . . . These works deserve to be studied, as the physician studies the twaddle of idiots, and the raving of madmen."<sup>58</sup> Another eminent scholar, M. Winternitz, similarly opines that the Brāhmanas "are unpalatable as reading, but indispensable to the understanding of the whole of the later religious and philosophical literature of the Indians and highly interesting for the general science of religion."<sup>59</sup>

Both these scholars have accepted the importance of the Brāhmanas only as records of religious speculations of the Indians of those days, particularly their specialization on the science of sacrifice. This is probably due to their view that the Brāhmanas are a kind of priestly manuals. But this is only a partial view of the importance of the Brāhmanas; really their importance is multifarious. Being originally the explanations of the mantras, the Brāhmanas contain many more topics than the mere science of sacrifice.

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58. History of Ancient Indian Literature, p. 200

59. History of Indian Literature, Vol. I, p. 163.

If one can approach the Brāhmanas with an unprejudiced mind and try to form a correct view of them, one will find in them a store of wealth of speculative stuff about a variety of subjects, which may offer some fresh channels of study to an inquisitive mind. The outstanding importance of the Brāhmanas has been ably pointed out by Julius Eggeling in his introduction to the esteemed translation of the Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa<sup>60</sup> — "While the Brāhmanas are, thus, our oldest sources from which a comprehensive view of the sacrificial ceremonial can be obtained, they also throw a great deal of light on the earliest metaphysical and linguistic speculations of the Hindus. Another even more interesting feature of these works, consists in the numerous legends scattered through them. . . . To the student of Sanskrit literature, works (together with their supplements, the Āraṇyakas and their metaphysical appendages, the Upaniṣads) are of the highest importance as the only genuine prose works which the Sanskrit as a popular language has produced. For the comparative study of syntax, the Brāhmanas offer a rich field of enquiry." In other words, the Brāhmanas present before us a picture of the social, religious and intellectual life of a section of Aryan peoples of ancient India. We may refer here to some important aspects of study which will help us to take a proper and correct view of the importance of the Brāhmanas.

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60. Introduction to Eggeling's translation of the Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa, Vol. XII, Pt. I in the series "The Sacred Books of the East", pp. xxiii, xxv.

First of all, the Brahmanas are, as Prof. Winternitz maintains, "invaluable authorities to the student of religion for the history of sacrifice and priesthood as the Saṁhitās of the Yajurveda are for the history of prayer".<sup>61</sup> In fact, the main theme of these works is nothing but speculations about sacrificial performances of those days. The single-minded devotion of the authors of the Brāhmaṇas to preserve the Vedic culture of a transitory period, which comes between the fresh air of the poetry of the Ṛgveda and the extreme maturity of knowledge in the Upaniṣads, made them remain totally absorbed in the details of sacrificial systems. Without them, knowledge about the sacerdotalism of ancient India would have remained incomplete. Sacrifice in those days attained tremendous importance; it came to be considered the noblest act in the world — 'yajño vai śreṣṭhatamaṁ karma' (Ś.Br., I. 7. 1. 5). It was regarded as an overwhelming power by which everything in this world and above was guided. The relation between gods and men was determined by sacrifice; the attainment of the highest object in life depended on sacrifice; what more, sacrifice is often said to be identical with Prajāpati, the divine creator of all — 'eṣa vai pratyakṣaṁ yajño yat Prajāpatiḥ' (Ś.Br., IV. 3, 4, 3). In every walk of life, sacrifice attained such an influence that any question, important or unimportant, relevant or irrelevant, has been answered in these texts in terms of sacrifice. As a consequence

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61. History of Indian Literature, Vol. I, p. 164.

"every single sacrificial act is treated with the greatest circumstantiality : enormous importance is attached to the most trivial circumstances, to the least details."<sup>62</sup>

But sacrificial 'twaddle' is not the last word about these Brāhmaṇas. It is true that religion here consists of mainly ceremonies and observances; it is also true that in this atmosphere, the priests became the 'sacred god' on this earth. Yet, even through this thick cloud of ritualism, sometimes sparks forth the light of true religious spirit, surcharged with ethical values and moral senses. The numerous cosmological speculations and myths are specially important in this respect, because we find in them the results of the earliest philosophical thinking of ancient Indians. "While trying to discover and set forth, after their own fashion, the workings of secret causes underneath the surface of things and of the mystic correspondence that knit together the multiform personal and impersonal, animate and inanimate, small and great potencies in nature . . . . the Brāhmaṇas were taking a great step in philosophy, the full significance of which was understood and developed only in the subsequent period."<sup>63</sup> Sometimes they become too symbolical; and there we find the beginning of the sacrificial symbolism of the Āraṇyakas which finally developed into the philosophical mysticism of the Upaniṣads.

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62. History of Indian Literature, Vol.I, p.172 — M. Winternitz.

63. Belvalkar and Ranade / History of Indian Philosophy, Vol.II, pp. 71-72, Poona.

Together with this theological system, the Brāhmaṇas present before us pictures of the social and geographical conditions of contemporary India, which may be greatly helpful to us to build an authentic history of ancient India. It is indeed an interesting thing about the Brāhmaṇas that along with the sacrificial matters, they contain much material that is non-sacrificial or very indirectly connected with the sacrifice. They fortunately contain a good deal of speculative stuff which trace the beginning of all later speculative sciences. According to Burnell,<sup>64</sup> "Beginnings of all Indian sciences are to be sought for in the Brāhmaṇas." Thus to mention a few —

Etymologizing is an exceedingly frequent practice in the Brāhmaṇas. It is from the Brāhmaṇas that we know that the word 'rakṣas' (meaning 'demon') comes from the root rakṣ 'to forbid' and because they forbade to sacrifice they are called Rakṣas; or dakṣiṇā (sacrificial gifts) may be derived from dakṣ 'to invigorate' (S. Br., II, 2, 2, 2); or āditya may be formed from ā-dā (to take) and the sun is called Āditya because he took from the stars their energy (S. Br., II, 1, 2, 18). Again the first day of the Darśa-pūrṇamāseṣṭi is called Upa-vasatha (from  $\sqrt{\text{up-vas}}$ ), because on this day all the gods betake themselves to his house to abide by him (S. Br., I, 1, 1, 7). The sacrificial portion that is offered up in the fire is called 'avadānam' and it

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64. Introduction of the Saṁhitopaniṣad Brāhmaṇa, edited by A.C. Burnell, p. v.

is derived in the Brāhmaṇas from  $\sqrt{\text{ava-day}}$  'to satisfy' (i.e. by which the gods are satisfied). Similarly the word āhuti is derived from  $\sqrt{\text{ā-hve}}$  (to invoke) instead of  $\sqrt{\text{ā-hu}}$  ('to offer in a sacrifice' - A.Br., I. 2). The sacrificial post is called the yūpa as the gods effaced (ayopayan) the sacrifice by the yūpa (A.Br., II. 1). Such etymologies, though sometimes fantastic, are of great importance as the precursors of Yāska's philological monument, the Nirukta.

Beautiful metaphors and identifications are also found in the Brāhmaṇas, such as between sacrifice and man (S.Br., III. 5, 3, 1-6), Agni and Samvatsara (T.Br., III. 11.10), Metres and the chariot (T.Br., I. 5. 12) and so on. We may quote here one or two such well drawn-out identifications to show that even in the midst of the simple, crude and heterogenous speculations, the authors of the Brāhmaṇas were sometimes capable of expressing genuine touch of poetic feeling. Thus the Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa identifies the Sacrifice with a man (III. 5, 3, 1-6) : "The Soma-cart (shed) is other than his head. The Āhavanīya is no other than his mouth; the sacrificial stake is no other than his crest-lock; and the Āgnīdhriya and Mārjālīya are his arms. The Sadas (tent for the priests) is no other than his belly. And the two fires which are behind it are his feet. In being spread, it is made just as large as a man: this is why the sacrifice is a man." The Taittirīya Brāhmaṇa (III. 11. 10) has very beautifully

established the following equation between Agni-Naciketas and the Samvatsara : "The year verily is Agni-Naciketas. Of it, the Spring is the head, the Summer the right side, the Rainy-season the tail, Early-autumn the upper-side and the Autumn-end the middle; the first fortnights are its brick-layers, the latter fortnights the filling mortar, the days and nights the bricks." Similarly, beautiful is the equation between the Metres and the chariot made by Prajāpati in the same Brāhmaṇa (I. 5, 12) : "Then spake Prajāpati : Metres, be ye my chariot; with your help will I traverse this road." Of it the Gāyatrī and Jagatī became the two flanks (or wheels); Uṣṇik and Triṣṭubh the poles; Anuṣṭubh and Pañkti the yoke-animals; and Brāhatī alone the driver's seat. He (Prajāpati) mounting upon this Metre-chariot traversed this road.

Again the Brāhmaṇas frequently mention different Nakṣatras, while they discuss about the establishment of the sacred fire for the performance of rituals. This fact proves their advanced knowledge in astronomy. Though the term Nakṣatra is derived there to mean 'powerless', it is actually used in the sense of 'lunar mansion', and the equation is like this — Āditya deprived the stars of their power; hence the powerless nakṣatra came to be so called. Taittirīya Brāhmaṇa mentions 24 nakṣatras viz. Kṛttikā etc. The idea that the sun is stationary and never rises nor sets is reflected even in those ancient people's thought. (Aitareya Brāhmaṇa, III. 14).

The Brāhmaṇas are, at the same time, the preserver of many a beautiful narratives directly or indirectly connected with the sacrifice. Some of them are specially important as they contain reference to some particular incidents or some historical personalities. Some of these narratives like the story of Śunaḥśēpa, the story of Manu and the Fish, the legendary dialogue between Purūravas and Urvaśī are beautiful specimens of literary works also. Indeed "these narratives are also of importance to us as oldest examples of Indian narrative prose which we possess."<sup>65</sup> Sometimes the Brāhmaṇas give us pretty allegorical legends which are at the same time interesting as well as instructive, and which also throw some light upon the origin of the allegorical literature of later times. In this way, one can find in the Brāhmaṇas interesting speculations on theological, philosophical, legendary, philological matters together with the reflection of the geographical, social and political conditions of ancient India, knowledge of astronomy and medicine, music and fine arts. In other words, the Brāhmaṇas has preserved for us invaluable data which will help us to form a correct estimate of the culture and civilisation of an important period of ancient India.

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65. M. Winternitz / History of Indian Literature, Vol. I, p. 184.

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CHAPTER - II

Special characteristics of the Śatapatha-Brāhmaṇa  
studied in comparison with other Brāhmaṇa-texts

Each of the Vedic Saṃhitās has its own Brāhmaṇas. We know that the Veda which had an oral tradition of long years was later preserved in different śākhās or schools and if we suppose that every Vedic śākhā or school consisted of a Saṃhitā and a Brāhmaṇa of its own, then the extent of the Brāhmaṇa-literature must have been vast and considerable. Of course, it must not be supposed that the Brāhmaṇas belonging to different śākhās of the same Vedic Saṃhitā were works of different authors, but just as the Saṃhitās of different śākhās were nothing but different recensions of the one and the same collection of hymns, differing only in the arrangement or in the addition and omission of certain hymns, so the Brāhmaṇa-works of different Śākhās must be regarded in most cases as the different recensions of one original. Prof. Max Miller<sup>1</sup> thinks that "There was originally but one body of Brāhmaṇas for each of the three Vedas; for the Ṛgveda, the Brāhmaṇas of the Bahvricas, for the Sāmaveda, the Brāhmaṇas of the Chhandogas and for the Yajurveda in its two forms, the Brāhmaṇas of the Taittirīyas and the Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa".

Many Brāhmaṇas must have been lost as is evident from the quotations from the lost Brāhmaṇas themselves found in our present texts. Dr. Batakrişna Ghosh in his "Collection

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1. Max Muller — A History of Ancient Sanskrit Literature, p. 311 (Published by the Chowkhamba Sanskrit Studies, Vol. XV, Varanasi, 1968).

of the fragments of lost Brāhmaṇas" has shown that, <sup>though</sup> much of the vast Brāhmaṇa literature has been preserved to us, even more has been lost.<sup>2</sup> Pāṇini,<sup>3</sup> the great grammarian, in course of laying down the rule of the use of Nin observes that there are certain Brāhmaṇas announced by old teachers, while others are by new teachers. It should be noted in this connection that according to the traditional view, the Veda, made up of mantra and brāhmaṇa, is apauruṣeya, impersonal in origin, and therefore held as eternal.<sup>4</sup> Historically, it may be said that the gradual development of the complicated system of sacrifice, which led to the arrangement of the Brāhmaṇa-works, dates back to a much higher age,

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2. Batakrisna Ghosh — Collection of the fragments of lost Brāhmaṇas - Introduction, p. i.

He further says that "Passages from lost Brāhmaṇas are occasionally quoted in the ancillary Vedic literature as well as in the later Sanskrit literature." In his work he has tried to collect these quotations and as a result of his most laborious task he has been able to prepare a list of at least sixteen Brāhmaṇas which are known but no Mss. of which are extant except the Jaiminiya Br. which has recently been edited and published. It may be quite possible that some of these Brāhmaṇas did not get a written form at all, but were handed down only by oral tradition and later became lost.

3. Ṣurāṇaprokṭeṣu brāhmaṇakalpeṣu — Pāṇini's Aṣṭādhyāyī - 4. 3. 5.
4. yugānte'ntarhitān vedān setihāsān maharṣayah /  
lebhire tapasā pūrvama-nujñātāḥ svayambhuvā //

(Mbh. Śāntiparvan, 210/19).

and the original stock of the Brāhmaṇa literature like the ancient part of the Vedic mantras was preserved only in oral tradition. The interval between this floating condition of the original stock and the oral transmission of the Brāhmaṇas extended over a long period was sufficient enough to raise the Brāhmaṇas to the status of Śruti or Revelation.

One interesting thing about the Brāhmaṇas has been suggested by the great Vedic scholar Max Müller.<sup>5</sup> He thinks that most of the Brāhmaṇas are collective works. The evidence behind this suggestion is that while a whole work consisting of several chapters or books is designated as 'Brāhmaṇa', sometimes the separate chapters or sections of the chapters also are mentioned as such. This is specially seen in the case of the Yajurveda. Thus the text belonging to the Black Yajurveda, which goes by the general name 'Kātha' has its component parts called 'brāhmaṇa'. The same feature is found in the Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa as well, belonging to the White Yajurveda. There, in the first book, we have nine chapters including thirty-seven 'brāhmaṇas'. Several Sāma-Veda Brāhmaṇas too contain some portions as elements belonging to the original Brāhmaṇas, but subsequently appearing as independent works. Probably from this, Max Müller has got a clue to suggest that the Brāhmaṇas are mostly collective works. We cannot, however, subscribe to the view of the learned scholar in its entirety. The mere fact that the

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5. Max Muller — A History of Ancient Sanskrit Literature, p. 312.

sections or chapters are called Brāhmaṇas does not prove conclusively that they are independent works put together in the frame of the collective whole. On the other hand, we may say that they are mere chapters or sections of a particular work. The title 'brāhmaṇa' is sometimes assigned to the chapters of the Āraṇyakas and of the Upaniṣads. These have no connection with any collective work of the Brāhmaṇa. The most we can say that these sections indicate a scheme of the chapter-division and possibly for this reason, it was introduced in the framework of the Āraṇyaka or the Upaniṣad and reference was made in the old school in terms of the said chapter-scheme. Thus a portion of the Brhadāraṇyaka which contains the dialogue between Yājñavalkya and Maitreyī is cited as the Maitreyī-brāhmaṇa.<sup>6</sup> Moreover, where reference was made to the Brāhmaṇas in the plural with the appellation of a teacher associated with the word, for example, Yājñavalkyāṇi Brāhmaṇāni, the irresistible conclusion is that they point to the sections or chapters connected with the teacher or the sage named. Actually no Brāhmaṇa is entirely a collective work consisting of several different Brāhmaṇas, on the other hand, a single Brāhmaṇa may have only its component chapters or sections. What is more correct to say is that the extant Brāhmaṇa-texts do not always represent the original works as they were nor are they the product of the same hand. These formed the part of oral tradition before these texts were arranged or redacted. But the redaction of ancient Brāhmaṇas must have been the work of individual

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6. Cf. Brhadāraṇyaka, IV.5,1.

teachers of later age who must have sought to represent the tradition faithfully as far as possible. It may be that some additions may have crept into the text as redacted.

Brāhmanas belonging to the RV. :

Apart from the possibility of the existence of a large body of older Brāhmanas, the existing Brāhmanas are also no less in number. One or more Brāhmanas are attached to each of the Vedic Saṁhitās. The Rk-Saṁhitā which is invariably the oldest collection of hymns, has two Brāhmanas attached to itself, viz. the Aitareya and the Kauṣītaki Brāhmaṇa which is also known as the Sāṅkhāyana Brāhmaṇa. Pāṇini<sup>7</sup> probably refers to the two Brāhmanas of the Rgveda when he speaks of the Brāhmanas which are said to contain thirty and forty adhyāyas. The Sāṅkhāyana or Kauṣītaki actually consists of thirty and the Aitareya forty adhyāyas respectively. Both these Brāhmanas belong to the Rgveda, they describe and explain the duties of the priests known as Hotrs, who mainly invoke the deities at sacrifices by reciting hymns from the Rk-Saṁhitā. They offer a distinction from the Brāhmanas belonging to the Yajurveda. The Brāhmanas of the Yajurveda profess to record the duties of the Adhvaryu-priests who are the actual performers of the sacrifices. Of the two Rgvedic Brāhmanas, the Aitareya,

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7. triṁśaccātvarīṁśator brāhmaṇe saṁjñayāṁ ḍaṇ / Aṣṭādhyāyī-sūtrapāṭha, V. I, 62 (2nd edition, edited by C. Sankara Rama Sastri, Madras, 1937).

which is the oldest work<sup>8</sup> of the kind, is specially important for its being a source of various kinds of information about that age. Its contents are concerned chiefly with the Soma-sacrifice. The Agniṣṭoma which is regarded as the model of all one-day Soma-sacrifices, is mentioned in it together with its principal modifications, the Ukthya, Ṣoḍaśī and Atirātra, and also Āśvina Śastra. There are also chapters dealing with the duties of the Hotṛ in the Satras. The Satras are sacrificial sessions, extended over a long period of time, a whole year or more. It includes some expiatory rites, sacrificial rites of the Kṣatriyas, and the dealing of the Kṣatriyas with the priestly class, ending with some magical rites, which the Purohita may employ to the king's enemies. The combination of such heterogeneous matters leads some scholars to think that the last ten chapters are of later origin. The other Bahvṛca Brāhmaṇa viz. the Kauṣītaki or the Sāṅkhāyana which is comparatively a work, shows a wider scope than the Aitareya as it includes, more or less, all the Śrauta-sacrifices of the principal kind. Out of its thirty adhyāyas, the first six deal with the food-sacrifices (viz. fire-laying sacrifices, oblation given to fire, new and full-moon sacrifices and sacrifices of the seasons). The remaining adhyāyas from the 7th to the 30th deal with the Soma-sacrifice which fairly agree with the description given in the Aitareya Brāhmaṇa. They are not so much informative on

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8. Prof. Keith considers the Aitareya Brāhmaṇa to be older than the Brāhmaṇa parts of the Taittīriya Saṁhitā, and certainly older than the Jaiminiya and Śatapatha Brāhmaṇas.  
— HOS, Vol. 25, 1920, pp. 44ff.

sacrificial materials as the Brāhmanas belonging to the Yajurveda. The Yajurveda Brāhmanas are like the hand-books for the guidance of the Hotṛ-priests in the matter of Sāstra or hymns to be recited by them. The Yajurveda-Brāhmanas are definitely of liturgical texts, as they are concerned with the duties of the Adhvaryu-priests whose function consists mainly in the practical performance of the sacrifices. The Brāhmanas of the Yajurveda, particularly the Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa of the White Yajurveda as such, are more illuminative and instructive than the Brāhmanas of the Rgveda.

Brāhmanas belonging to the Sāmaveda :

To the Sāmaveda belongs probably the largest number of the Brāhmanas though most of them are of meagre importance for the history of sacrificial religion in India. It is curious that scholars older or later, in the traditional circle, speak of their <sup>number</sup> as eight. Kumārila Bhaṭṭa<sup>9</sup> in his Tantravarttika (I.3) speaks of the eight Brāhmanas of the Chandogas, though he does not mention them <sup>by</sup> name. Sāyaṇācārya, the great Vedic commentator, in his introduction to the Sāmavidhāna Brāhmaṇa<sup>10</sup> mentions ~~the~~ eight such Brāhmanas,

9. brāhmanāni hi yānyaṣṭau sarahasyāny-adhīyate chandogāsteṣu sarveṣu na kaścin niyataḥ svarah / Tantravārttika, edited by MM. Gangadhara Sastri, Benares, 1901.
10. aṣṭau hi brāhmaṇagranthāḥ praudhāḥ brāhmaṇamādimam / śaḍviṃśākhyam dvitīyaṁ syāttataḥ sāmavidhir bhavet // ārṣeyaṁ devatādhyāyaṁ mantraṁ vopaniṣattataḥ / samhitopaniṣad vaṁśo grantha aṣṭavitīritah // (Sl. 6-7) Introduction to the Sāmavidhāna Brāhmaṇa, edited by Satyavrata Bhattacharya, Calcutta, 1895.

by name. They are — the Tāṇḍya-mahābrāhmaṇa or Prauḍha or Pañcaviṁśa Brāhmaṇa, the Śaḍviṁśa Brāhmaṇa, the Sāmavidhi or Sāmavidhāna Brāhmaṇa, the Ārṣeya, the Devatādhyaṇya Brāhmaṇa, the Mantra or Upaniṣad Brāhmaṇa, the Saṁhitopanīṣad Brāhmaṇa and the Vāṁśa Brāhmaṇa.

These Brāhmaṇas as a whole, are solely concerned with the duties of the Udgātr̥s who were to sing the proper Sāman at the proper time in the sacrifice. These texts usually do not explain the individual Sāma verses; they confine themselves to the teaching of the melodies. Naturally, their importance as theological treatises is far less than the Brāhmaṇas of the Yajurveda. But as they contain lessons on the melodies they are certainly important as throwing light on the history of Indian Music. It is to be noted here that the relations between the Brāhmaṇas and the Saṁhitās belonging to both the Sāmaveda and the Yajurveda seem to indicate some definite scheme of relevance evolved as they were in the tradition of sacrificial scholasticism to meet the requirements of the rituals.

Of this group of eight Brāhmaṇas, the Tāṇḍyamahā-brāhmaṇa or the Prauḍha or the Pañcaviṁśa Brāhmaṇa is of special interest. It is only one such Brāhmaṇa which possesses the characteristics of a true Brāhmaṇa. It deals with the details of the innumerable varieties of the Soma-sacrifice and the chanting of the Sāmans. The Śaḍviṁśa Brāhmaṇa is really a supplement to the Pañcaviṁśa Brāhmaṇa and is



reckoned as its 26th Books.<sup>11</sup> The Mantra or Chāndogya Brāhmaṇa consists of ten books, eight of which comprise Upaniṣad. The three Brāhmaṇas, namely, the Tāṇḍyamahābrāhmaṇa of twenty-five chapters, the Ṣaḍviṃśa Brāhmaṇa of five chapters and the Mantra-Brāhmaṇa of ten chapters (including Upaniṣad) represent a Brāhmaṇa of the Kauthumas consisting of forty adhyāyas. The remaining Sāmaveda Brāhmaṇas are called by Paṇḍit Sāmāśramī<sup>12</sup> as 'anubrāhmaṇas'. It will be easily seen from a glance at them that they suffer from the lack of originality and that of the abundance of interests whether of philology, mythology or ritualism which characterise a great Brāhmaṇa.

Besides these eight Brāhmaṇas, another important Brāhmaṇa-text, belonging to the Sāmaveda and not annotated by Sāyana, called the Jaiminiya or Talavakara Br. was discovered towards the end of the last century (by Dr. Burnell in South India). From the attempts<sup>13</sup> so far made by the scholars to throw light on its character, it appears that

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11. Sāyana in his commentary on the Ṣaḍviṃśa Brāhmaṇa writes about this Brāhmaṇa ss — "asmin tāṇḍakasēṣe brāhmaṇe ..." etc. Paṇḍaka here refers to the Pañcaviṃśa Br.
  12. Paṇḍit Satyavrata Samasrami / Usa, 1812, Sravana.
  13. A selection from the Jaiminiya-Brāhmaṇa, texts with German translations, was published by W. Caland in 1919. The entire text was edited and published by Lokescandra (Nagpur, 1954). Hertel, K. Hoffmann and others have made contributions to a critical and linguistic study of the text.

this Brāhmaṇa has some substantial importance <sup>like</sup> ~~the~~ the Aitareya or even the Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa, as a depository of invaluable legends and rituals.

The Gopatha Brāhmaṇa belonging to the AV :

Before entering into the discussion about the Brāhmaṇas of the Yajurveda, we have to mention the name of another Brāhmaṇa viz. the Gopatha Brāhmaṇa belonging to the Atharvaveda. But truly speaking, the text has not much importance as a Brāhmaṇa-work. It is obviously a late production, even later than some Sūtra-works. Sometimes it gives us literal repetitions of different lines from different Brāhmanical texts such as the Aitareya Br., the Kauṣītaki Br., the Taittirīya Saṁhitā, The Maitrāyaṇī Saṁhitā and also the Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa. No author is mentioned for this Brāhmaṇa and it also does not show any uniformity of plan and seems to be composed by different hands.

Yajurveda Brāhmaṇas :

It is obvious that the Yajurveda also, like the Sāmaveda, is intended for strictly practical purposes and to this Veda belongs the monumental work, the Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa. The formulas of the Yajurveda are contained in two recensions of the Black (Kṛṣṇa) and the White (Śukla) and are meant for the use of the Adhvaryu-priests. The collections of both these recensions contain formulas for the entire sacrificial

ceremonials and consequently the Brāhmaṇas belonging to them contain expositions of the entire sacrificial system. While the Brāhmaṇas of the Ṛgveda and the Sāmaveda are devoted more or less to the exposition of the particular functions of the Hotṛ and the Udgāṭṛ priests respectively in some particular ceremony, viz. the Soma sacrifice, the Brāhmaṇas of the Yajurveda are essentially the sacrificial manuals and form the foundation, as it were, of the Vedic sacerdotalism.

The Black Yajurveda :

To the Taittirīya Saṁhitā of the Black Yajurveda belongs one important Brāhmaṇa called the Taittirīya Brāhmaṇa which is however, in reality a continuation of the Saṁhitā-portion. This is indeed an important characteristic of the Black Yajurveda, that here the 'theological discussions' which form the proper contents of the Brāhmaṇas are mixed up with the Mantras which are generally collected as Saṁhitās and according to some it is for this reason that the Yajurveda of this recension is called Kṛṣṇa (black) which is explained by the commentators as 'mixed'. Prof. Weber<sup>14</sup> in his Indische Studien cites a verse which is ascribed to some Vidyāranya who says that the old text of Yajus was called Kṛṣṇa because 'it contained the rules of the Hotṛ as well as the Adhvaryu priests and thus bewildered the mind of student'.

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14. ādhvaryavaṁ kvacidḍhautraṁ kvaciditya-vyavasthayā /  
buddhimālinyahetutvāt tad yajuhḥ kṛṣṇamīryate //

Indische Studien - I. 27. 84.

The name Taittirīya, says Pāṇini,<sup>15</sup> is due to its connection with a ṛṣi of that name. According to some other legend, the name is derived from the transformation of the pupils of Vaiśampāyana into partridges (tittiri) in order to swallow the Yajuh verses disgorged by one of their co-disciples with whom the teacher became angry. The story may be absurd, but it certainly throws some light upon the undigested contents of the Brāhmaṇa-work. As Prof. Weber remarks in his History of Ancient Literature,<sup>16</sup> it is "a motely, undigested jumble of different pieces." The partridges (tittiri birds) have variegated colours, the name Taittirīya is also attached to works containing topics of mixed character.

The mantra-portion being mixed with passages of brāhmaṇical character, the so-called Brāhmaṇa-portion of the Black yajus shows meagreness as regards the exposition of the rituals. In comparison with the Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa it presents only a very imperfect picture of the Vedic sacrifices. The order of the ceremonials is more or less the same as in the White Yajurveda; the sacrificial formulas are also more or less identical with those found in the Saṃhitā of the White Yajus. But the order of arrangement of the same is different. It is fairly clear that the Brāhmaṇa in this recension had its origin after the tradition of the Bahvṛca school having the Mantra and the Brāhmaṇa portion quite separately and distinctly arranged. And while discussing the

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15. tittirivaratantukhaṇḍikokhācchan / Pāṇini / Aṣṭādhyāyī-sūtrapāṭha / IV. 3. 102, p. 108.

16. A. Weber — A History of Indian Literature, p. 87

Brāhmaṇa-text of the Taittirīyas we have to take into account the Brāhmaṇa-portions of the Saṁhitā also and actually they do not show much difference from their later continuation. However, such explanatory texts are not found with all the verses of the Saṁhitā. Only those which are theologically important are dealt with. It seems most probable that the relation between the Saṁhitā and the Brāhmaṇa is not the same as between the Saṁhitā and Brāhmaṇa of the Bahvṛcas. In the case of the latter, the work of collecting the mantras was completed long before the composition of the Aitareya Brāhmaṇa. But the case is not the same with the Yajurveda which is otherwise termed as the Adhvaryuveda. Here the nature of the duties to be performed by the Adhvaryu-priests naturally led to the admixture of the sacrificial formulas to be uttered by them and the sacrificial injunctions to be followed by the same persons. Thus here the Saṁhitā and the Brāhmaṇa go hand in hand and it is difficult to say which is the earlier. In the case of the Vājasaneyins (i.e. the White Yajuh) what happened is that they wanted to have a separate Saṁhitā or a collection of the Yajuh verses just like the collection of the Ṛks and the Sāmans; so there we get a complete collection of hymns distinct from the ceremonial rules which go by the popular name the Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa. We will find later that in the new school of the white Yajuh, the Brāhmaṇa is the most outstanding work and the Saṁhitā is a mere collection of verses which probably came into existence to meet the demand of the priests. There is

a close correspondence between the verses of the Saṁhitā and the ritualistic exegesis of the Yajurveda.

White Yajurveda :

The school of the White Yajuh contains the collection of formulas distinctly separated from their explanations and rituals as in the case of the Rgveda and the Sāmaveda; but the picture of the rituals is more complete and comprehensive here than in the Brāhmaṇas of the Rgveda and the Sāmaveda. The White Yajuh-Brāhmaṇa presents a full view of the sacrificial system of ancient India. In the Brāhmaṇas of the Rgveda the order of the rituals does not follow the arrangement of the ṛks in the Saṁhitā, nor are all the mantras quoted and explained in the Brāhmaṇas. This possibly suggests that there was a time-gap between the arrangement of the Saṁhitā and the redaction of the Brāhmaṇas of the Rv. The Saṁhitā had been arranged earlier while the Brāhmaṇas belonged to a late date. But in the case of the Sāmaveda and the Yajurveda there was possibly no such time gap. The rituals therefore, correspond to the hymns in the Saṁhitās. The Saṁhitās and the Brāhmaṇas seem to go hand in hand and both appear to have redacted for the same sacrificial purpose.

Indeed, the Brāhmaṇa-work of the White Yajuh viz. the Śatapatha-Brāhmaṇa stands as monumental not only in its own school but also among all the Brāhmaṇa-works we possess. It surpasses all other Brāhmaṇa-works, as regards the extent of its content. Likewise, it is an epoch-making work from

the viewpoint of history, religion and ritual of ancient India. Unlike the other Vedas, the White Yajurveda possesses its Saṁhitā and Brāhmaṇa entirely in two recensions — the Kāṇva and the Mādhyandina. It is, however, difficult to say anything definitely regarding the mutual relationship between these two recensions — whether one is older than the other or whether both originate from another older original. It is so because the names of these two recensions are found mentioned nowhere in the older texts except in the Prātisākhya-sūtra which again belongs to the White Yajur, itself. A comparison between the Brāhmaṇa-texts of these two recensions shows that the two texts are very closely related in respect of the subject matter, specially in the books I to VII of the Kāṇva recension and the books I to V of the Mādhyandinas. But as regards the arrangement and distribution of the materials there are discrepancies. Consequently, it does not help us to fix up the relative priority or otherwise of a particular recension. It is often seen that when the text of one recension departs from the sequence as found in the Saṁhitā, the text of the other recension equally shows the same tendency. Thus Prof. Caland<sup>17</sup> has remarked in his edition of the Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa of the Kāṇva recension: "the Piṇḍa pitṛyajña, for instance, which in the Saṁhitā is treated after the Darsāpūrnāmāsa, has its place in the Mādhyandina recension after the agnyupasthāna, in the Kāṇva recension after the Agnihotra, both us departing equally

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17. W. Caland — The Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa of the Kāṇva recension, ■

from the order observed in the Saṁhitā." Though the content and its arrangement are of no help to us in the matter of relative chronology, yet language may be somewhat helpful in determining the age of a particular text. In this respect the more archaic nature of the expressions in the Kāṇva recension obviously points to its higher antiquity. Moreover, the name Kāṇva reminds us of the ancient ṛṣi family of the Ṛgveda. At the same time, we cannot certainly admit of a long interval of time between these two recensions because of their close resemblance.<sup>18</sup>

The term 'Śukla' means 'unmixed' :

The term 'Śukla' (white) attached to this new school of the Yajurveda may be explained with reference to a legend. According to this tradition Yājñavalkya, to whom the White Yajuh texts are ascribed, received them from the Sun-god Himself, who is the source of all light (Śukla = Śubhra). Commentators, however, give the more plausible explanation of the term Śukla as śuddha (unmixed),<sup>19</sup> because in contrast to the case of the Kṛṣṇa Yajurveda, the Brāhmaṇa portion of the Śukla Yajurveda is not mixed up with mantra.

As Yājñavalkya is mentioned together <sup>with</sup> the appellation Vājasaneyā, both the Saṁhitā and the Brāhmaṇa of this

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18. We are, however, concerned in our present work with the Brāhmaṇa-text of the Mādhyandina Sākhā which is now available to us well-edited by Dr. Weber with extracts of commentaries by Sāyana and Harisvāmin.

19. brāhmaṇenāmisṛitamantṛātmaṇi -- as explained by Dvivedagāṅga.



school are also called Vājasaneyī. Tradition also preserves a story according to which Yājñavalkya was the disciple of the ṛṣi Vaisāmpāyana. On some occasion Vaisāmpāyana incurred the sin of Brāhmaṇa-slaughter and asked all his disciples to expiate jointly on his behalf. But Yājñavalkya said that he alone was enough for the act. At this Vaisāmpāyana became angry with Yājñavalkya and asked him to give back all that he had learnt from him. Accordingly, Yājñavalkya the greatest of the knowers of the Veda, vomitted forth the lore of the Yajus shaped into physical form and returned them to Vaisāmpāyana. The other disciples, at the bidding of Vaisāmpāyana, assumed the form of tittira birds and ate up the said Yajuses. They later came to be known as the Taittirīyas. Yājñavalkya then started meditation praying to the Sun-god for a new Vedic knowledge. The Sun-god, assuming the form of a horse (Vājin), imparted to him the knowledge of the new Yajuses. Those who accepted this knowledge were called the Vājins inasmuch as it was imparted by the Sun-god in the guise of a horse (vājin). Those pupils of Vaisāmpāyana who expiated the sin of Brahma-vadhyā on behalf of their teacher by wandering about in holy places came to be known as the Carakas.

This account of the dischord between Vaisāmpāyana and Yājñavalkya is found almost in a similar form in most of the Purāṇas, specially in Vāyu (61, 13-24), Brahmāṇḍa (I, 35, 8-27) and the Viṣṇu Purāṇas (III, 5 Ch.). Mahīdhara mentions almost the same story in the introduction to his

commentary on the White Yajurveda.<sup>20</sup> It is not, however, certain to what extent we may take the legend as true. But in all probability, it seems to represent the kernel of truth that from Yājñavalkya there emerged a different school as a new branch of the Yajurveda. As a later work, Śukla Yajurveda shows better arrangement and more systematic treatment than those of the older one. Those who stuck<sup>to</sup> the older tradition came to be known as the Taittirīyas while the followers of the new school called themselves Vājasaneyins. Now besides the Taittirīyas there was certainly another group, the Carakas who were disliked by the Vājasaneyins. The quarrel between Vaisāmpāyana and Yājñavalkya extended among their followers too and a kind of rivalry and mutual jealousy among them grew to such an extent that in both the Saṁhitā and the Brāhmaṇa of the Vājasaneyins we find derogatory

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20. tatra vyāsaśiṣyo vaisāmpāyano yājñavalkyā-dibhyaḥ  
 svaśiṣyebhyaḥ yajurvedaṁ adhyāpayat / tatra daivāt  
 kenāpi hetunā kruddho vaisāmpāyano yājñavalkyaṁ  
 pratyuvāca madadhīstaṁ tyajeti / sa yogasāmarthyāt  
 mūrtāṁ vidyāṁ vidhāyodvavāma / vāntāni yajūṁsi  
 grhṇīteti guruktā anye vaisāmpāyanaśiṣyā stittirayo  
 bhūtvā yajūṁśya bhaksayan / tāni yajūṁsi buddhimālinyāt  
 kṛṣṇāni jātāni / tato duḥkhito yājñavalkyaḥ sūryamā-  
 rādhyetāni sūklāni yajūṁsi prāptavān / tāni ca  
 jābalagaudheya-kāṇva-mādhyandinādibhyaḥ pañcadaśa-  
 śiṣyebhyaḥ paṭhitavān / Mahīdhara-bhāṣya on  
 Śuklayajurvedīya Vājasaneyīsaṁhitā, Mādhyandinasākhā,

remarks and aspersions against the Carakas.<sup>21</sup> In the Vājasaneyī Brāhmaṇa (i.e. the Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa) also in many places (IV. 1, 2, 19; VI. 2, 2, 1; VI. 2, 2, 10; VIII.1, 3, 7; VIII. 7, 1, 14 etc.) we notice notes of dissection against the views of the Carakas. Prof. Max Müller<sup>22</sup> points out "the general name of the ancient Śākhās of the Yajurveda is Caraka, and the Taittirīyas, therefore, together with the Kāṭhas and others are called by a general name." If this view is correct, then we may take the reference to Carakas or Carakādhvaryus in the Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa as pointing to the Black Yajus as a whole; in that case the works of Yājñavalkya are to be taken as dictated by a feeling of jealousy which led him to secede from the old school of Yajus.

Yājñavalkya Vājasaneyā :

As already mentioned both the Saṁhitā and the Brāhmaṇa of the White Yajus is ascribed to the name of Yājñavalkya Vājasaneyā. Mahīdhara<sup>23</sup> in the introduction to his commentary on the Śukla Yajuh Saṁhitā quotes a line that

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21. Thus in one of the Khilas of the Vājasaneyī-Saṁhitā the name Caraka is found expressing the sense of reproach. Again while giving a list of victims who are to be sacrificed at the Puruṣamedha, the 30th Adhyāya of the Vājasaneyī-Saṁhitā mentions the Carakā-cārya as the proper victim to be offered.
  22. Max Muller — A History of Ancient Sanskrit Literature, p. 315.
  23. Mahīdharabhāṣya on Śukla-Yajurvedīya-Vājasaneyīsaṁhitā Mādhyandinaśākhā, p. 1.

"these Yajuses received from the Sun are being declared by Vājasaneyā Yājñavalkya" — 'ādityanīmāni sūklāni yajūṃsi vājasaneyena yājñavalkyenākhyāyante'." This line is also found at the end of the existing Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa of the Mādhyandina Śākhā. The appellation Vājasaneyā is explained as the son of Vājasani, and some think <sup>24</sup> that Vājasani was the female name ('Vāja' means 'food', i.e. anna, and 'sani' means prāpti, i.e. the source of the supply of food — a name parallel with the later form Annapūrṇā). By the rule 'strībhyo ḍhak' (Pāṇ. IV. 1. 120) we may derive the term Vājasaneyā as from Vājasani just as Kaunteya from Kuntī, Aitareya from Itarā, etc. Others say that Vājasani was the name of a male person. There are words like Āruṇeya in the sense of the son of Āruṇi, Bhāllaveya in the sense of the son of Bhallu, Kauṣītakeya in the sense of the son of Kauṣītaki, etc. Similarly the word Vājasaneyā may be formed in the sense of the son of his father 'Vājasani'. Mahīdhara, <sup>25</sup> while beginning his commentary on the White Yajurveda says that Yājñavalkya was the son of a person named 'Vājasani' and according to him 'sani', means 'gift' (dāna) and not 'receipt' (prāpti). The name Yājñavalkya may indicate also a family or gotra-name, because we hear of several Yājñavalkyas in ancient India. Besides the illustrious Yājñavalkya whose name is traditionally associated with the White

24. S.N. Pradhan — Vājasaneyā Yājñavalkya and his times, p. 10.

25. Vājasyānanasya sanir dānaṃ yasya sa vājasanistadapatyaṃ Vājasaneyah — Mahīdharabhāṣya, Śuklayajurvedīya-vājasaneyī saṃhitā, p. 1.

Yajurveda as a great master in the science of Theology as well as a great Philosopher there was possibly another Yājñavalkya who, is the famous author of the Smṛtisamhitā. It is, however, interesting to note that the author of the Yājñavalkyasmṛti claims in his Law Book<sup>26</sup> the authorship of the Āraṇyaka, the knowledge of which was received by him from the Sun and also of the Yogasāstra. But in the absence of any other definite proof, it is difficult to admit the identity of these two persons. On the contrary, the evidence of style and language shows that the two works are probably the compositions of two distinct authors.<sup>27</sup> The Mahābhārata gives us the name of one Yājñavalkya who officiated as Adhvaryu priest in the Rājasūya sacrifice of Yudhiṣṭhira.<sup>28</sup>

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26. Yājñavalkyasmṛti, III. 111 — jñeyam cāraṇya-kamaham yadādityādavāptavān / yogasāstraṁ ca matproktaṁ jñeyam yogambhīpsayā //

27. At the beginning of the commentary on the Dharmasāstra of Yājñavalkya called the Mitākṣarā, it has been stated that the Dharmasāstra of Yājñavalkya was abridged by some pupil of him. Cf. Yājñavalkyaśiṣyaḥ kaścit prasnot-tararūpaṁ Yājñavalkyapranītaṁ Dharmasāstraṁ saṁkṣīpya kathayāmāsa.

Dr. P.V. Kane in his most renowned work viz. History of Dharmasāstra has, however, pointed out that whether "the sage who promulgated the Aranyaka and the author of the Smṛti" are identical or not, "the Yajnavalkya-smṛti is much more closely connected with the White Yajurveda and the literature particularly belonging to it than any other Veda". (Vol. I, Pt. I, p. 423).

28. Mahābhārata (II. 33-35).

Date of Yājñavalkya :

Regarding the date and identity of the author of the Satapatha Brāhmaṇa we may try to adduce some elements<sup>of</sup> proof, both external and internal. The Purāṇas tell us that Yājñavalkya was a contemporary of king Janamejaya. The important Purāṇas like the Vāyu, Matsya or the Brahmāṇḍa narrate the legend that Janamejaya was cursed by Vaisāmpāyana for appointing Yājñavalkya and his followers, Vājasaneyins, as priests in his two Asvamedha sacrifices.<sup>29</sup> He, however, remained faithful in having the sacrifices done according to the Vājasaneyi formalities. The king was then compelled to leave his empire and go to the forest because of a rebellion raised among the Brāhmaṇas of the opposite school. The evidence of the Purāṇas is not always conclusive but it should be noted here that this is exactly the point on which Yājñavalkya was asked by Bhujyu in the Brhadāranyaka Upaniṣad at the court of Janaka.<sup>30</sup> Again the Viṣṇu and the Bhāgavata Purāṇas state that Yājñavalkya taught the Vedas to Śātānīka, the son of Janamejaya. Now Janamejaya is the name of the great grandson of Arjuna, the famous hero of the Mbh. The Mbh. personages must have been in existence long before the story took a final shape. The contemporaneity of Yājñavalkya with a Mahābhārata character may easily indicate his belonging to the later Vedic period.

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29. Janamejaya, as a performer of the Asvamedha sacrifice is mentioned in the Śat. Br. (XIII. 5, 4, 1-3), Ait. Br. (VII. 34; VIII. 27) and the Sāṅkhyāna Śrauta Sūtra (XVI. 8, 27).

30. Brhadāranyaka Upaniṣad, III. 3, 1.

More decisive is the relation of Yājñavalkya with king Janaka of Videha as frequently mentioned in the Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa (XI. 3, 1, 2; 4, 3, 20; 6, 2, 1 etc.) and the Brhadāraṇyaka (III. 1, 1; IV. 1, 1; 2, 1; 4, 7; V. 14, 8). Janaka was a contemporary in his later life and it was in his assembly-hall that Yājñavalkya established his own superiority over other scholars. Now Janaka who was a great patron of Brāhmanical religion and specially of Yājñavalkya has been mentioned in the Kausītaki Upaniṣad (IV. 1) and the Brhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad (II. 1, 1), as the contemporary of the prince Ajātaśatru of Kāśī. This fact certainly does not contribute much to arrive at a definite conclusion because there is every doubt to identify this Ajātaśatru with the Buddhist prince Ajātaśatru of Magadha of the Pali texts. Among other facts this may specially be mentioned that in that case the Brhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad becomes subsequent to Buddha which is totally absurd. For had Buddha appeared before the composition of the Brhadāraṇyaka, he should have been mentioned there at least as an opposer or rather off-shooter of the Vedic religion.<sup>31</sup> More

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31. Janaka is also well-known in the ancient Indian mythology as the father of Sītā, the wife of Rāma, but this fact also does not help us much to arrive at a conclusion regarding Yājñavalkya's date, because for want of sufficient testimony these two persons of the same name cannot be indubitably proved to be the same. Prof. H.C.Roychowdhury similarly has opined that there were most possibly several kings bearing the name Janaka and hence it is very difficult to identify any of these with the great Janaka of the Vedic texts. — Political History of Ancient India, p. 55.

important is the fact that king Janaka of Videha is mentioned in Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa (XI. 6, 2, 1) as meeting the scholars like Śvetaketu, Āruneya, Somaśusma, Sātyayagnī and Yājñavalkya. Among them Śvetaketu is again mentioned in the Āpastamba Gṛhya Sūtra (I. 2, 5, 6) as one who became a ṛṣi by his knowledge of the Veda at an obviously later period when brahmacarya rules and the Brāhmanical order of life were strictly followed by the people.<sup>32</sup> In the Mahābhārata (I, 4723) also Pāṇḍu says about Śvetaketu, the son of Mahārṣi Uddālaka as having lived 'not long ago'. Uddālaka Āruni is again referred to as the teacher of Yājñavalkya in the Brhadāranyaka Upaniṣad (III. 7,1). None of these facts and references can, however, establish a definite date, but they may suggest that the work [which is well-known as the composition of Yājñavalkya] is a production belonging to a comparatively later period in the Vedic era.

Yājñavalkya's relation with Pāṇini, the great grammarian, also suggests the same conclusion. There is however, no direct reference to the Vājasaneyins or Yājñavalkya or even Śatapatha in any Aṣṭādhyāyī sūtra of Pāṇini. Still his acquaintance with the Yajurveda is definitely proved from a number of sūtras (II. 4, 4; VI. 1, 117; VII. 4, 38; VIII. 3, 104 etc.).<sup>33</sup> Moreover, there is a sūtra in Pāṇini's

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32. tasmād ṛṣayo'vareṣu na jāyante niyamātikramāt / (4)  
 Śrutarsāyas tu bhavanti kecit karma-phala-  
 śeṣeṇa punaḥ sambhave / (5)  
 yathā Śvetaketuḥ / (6)

33. The words Vājasaneyins, Yājñavalkya and Śatapatha are found to occur in gaṇas to Pāṇini's original sūtras. For example — The word Vājasaneyin occurs in a gaṇa to Pāṇini, IV. 3, 106; The word Śatapatha occurs in a gaṇa to Pāṇini's



Aṣṭādhyāyī (viz. purāṇaprokteṣu brāhmaṇakalpeṣu — IV. 3. 105) which together with the sūtras 'tena proktam' (IV. 3.101) and 'kaśyapakaśīkābhyāmṛṣibhyām niniḥ' (IV. 3. 103) completes the sense and means that the technical affix nini comes after a word in the third case in construction, when it denotes a Brāhmaṇa or a Kalpa-work enounced by ancient sages. Kātyāyana in his Vārttika<sup>34</sup> on this sūtra speaks of the Brāhmaṇas of Yājñavalkya as an instance where nini is not added, because of contemporaneousness. Patañjali<sup>35</sup> further makes it clear by affording the instance, 'Yājñavalkyāni brāhmaṇāni', where the word 'Yājñavalkyāni' is formed not by adding the technical affix nini, but by the affix an. Now because of the particular word tulyakāla (contemporaneous) in Kātyāyana's Vārttika most scholars think that Kātyāyana speaks of Yājñavalkya as a contemporary of Pāṇini and establishes him as comparatively modern among the authors of the Brāhmaṇas. This is the view of the most of the Western scholars. As Dr. P.V. Kane<sup>36</sup> writes in his History of Dharmaśāstras,

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Sūtra V. 3. 100. Scholars are however not very sure every work in a gaṇa was approved by Pāṇini himself.

34. Purāṇaprokteṣu brāhmaṇakalpeṣu Yājñavalkyādibhyaḥ pratiṣedhastulyakālatvāt / Kātyāyana / Vārttika of the Calcutta edition to IV. 3. 105 of Aṣṭādhyāyī.
35. Purāṇaproktesvityatra Yājñavalkyādibhyaḥ pratiṣedho vaktavyaḥ / Yājñavalkāni brāhmaṇāni / Saulabhānīti / kiṃ kāraṇam / tulyakālatvāt / etānyapi tulya-kālānīti / Patañjali / Mahābhāṣya, Vol. IV, p. 216.
36. Mahamohopadhyaya, Dr. P.V. Kane — History of Dharmaśāstras, Vol. I, pt. I, p. 422.

"Western scholars held that Pāṇini made a distinction between old and later Brāhmaṇa-works and regarded Yājñavalkya Brāhmaṇas as co-eval with himself."

It is probable that by the word 'purāṇa' in his rule Pāṇini has meant the most ancient sages whose works were of antiquity. Thus Śāṭyāyana and Bhallu are such ancient teachers and ṇini is attached to their names to signify the Brāhmaṇas enounced by them. Yājñavalkya is relatively modern. Hence ṇini<sup>is</sup> forbidden in his case. Pāṇini has given a rule in general terms. Kāṭyāyana seems to explain the rule by referring to the word Yājñavalkya etc. where ṇini should not be used and gives reason for the application of the rule. He makes it clear that Yājñavalkya belongs to the period of Pāṇini and ṇini should not be attached to his works. Later grammarian Kaiyaṭa in his commentary on Patañjali's Mahābhāṣya however, interprets the Vārttika in a different way.<sup>37</sup> According to him, the condition 'tulyakālatvāt' does not go with Pāṇini, but with the old teachers like Śāṭyāyana etc. The purport of such interpretation is<sup>to</sup> hold the view that Yājñavalkya being contemporary with old teachers, there was no bar to the use of suffix ṇini, but by the said special rule of vārttika, ṇini though permissible is excluded. Nāgārjuna subscribes to this interpretation of Kaiyaṭa. From these interpretations, it becomes clear that Yājñavalkya is taken to be the old teacher. At least this is what follows from

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37. tulyakālatvāditi / Śāṭyāyanādiproktair brāhmaṇaireka-kālatvāditīyarthah / Mahābhāṣya, Vol. IV, p. 216.

Kaiyaṭa's explanation. How far these interpretations of the later commentators of grammar, are decisive about the age of Yājñavalkya, is a question to be considered with caution and moderation. It may be that they expressed such opinion only out of reverence for Yājñavalkya, who in their times posed to be an old sage of hoary antiquities.

All these external evidences possibly make Yājñavalkya belong to a later period among the ancient authorities on the Brāhmaṇical speculations. He belongs to the Brāhmaṇa-period no doubt, but likely to the later phase. Āpastambha (Āp. Gr. Sū. I. 2, 5, 6) mentions Yājñavalkya as a contemporary and co-disciple of Śvetaketu, who is called by him, as a 'modern ṛṣi'. From internal evidence also, Yājñavalkya seems to be more modern than the ancient authorities. First of all, the systematic and distinctive arrangement of the mantra and Brāhmaṇa portions in the White Yajurveda makes this new branch an offshoot from the older ones. The geographical, social and religious conditions as reflected in the present text point to a later stage of their composition. It is well-known that the early Aryan civilisation was centered in the land of Pañcajanas i.e. in the Punjab and it gradually extended towards the east, so that in the Śat. Br. (I. 6, 3, 11) we find reference to the eastern and western oceans. The river Sarasvatī has now lost its past glory; instead the river Sadānīra (which has been identified with the river Gaṇḍakī) is of frequent mention. Among the tribes, the Kurus along with their allies the Pāṇcālas became prominent

in the Śat. Br., while they were not so prominently mentioned before. The social condition also, specially the well-established form of caste-system as indicated in the text naturally points to its lateness. The dominant position of the Brāhmaṇas is already an established institution guiding the life of all the people. Like all other Brāhmaṇa-texts, the Ś. Br. also makes the sacrifice the central theme of discussion. Yet, side by side with the complexities of the sacerdotal system, we find here the glimmering trend of knowledge which attained its culmination during the later Upaniṣadic age. The Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa emphatically asserts that "through knowledge alone that state of supreme bliss is attainable; desires cannot reach it; sacrificial gifts, acts of piety or the penance of the ignorant cannot attain that supreme state" (Ś. Br. X. 5, 4, 16). Here we find the idea of Impersonal Absolute (S. Br., X. 4, 1, 9) termed as Brahman (Newt.) and the absorption of all gods and all created beings in that Imperishable All-soul Absolute. It shows closeness of the idea as stressed in the Upaniṣad and consequently the text cannot be dated much far back from the Upaniṣadic era.

#### The Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa :

The Brāhmaṇa of the Vājasaneyins very properly bears the name 'Śatapatha' because truly it consists of a

hundred pathas or adhyāyas.<sup>38</sup> Both as regards its bulky extent and the variety of the materials dealt therein, this Brāhmaṇa occupies a most prominent place among the whole Brāhmaṇa literature. The name 'Śatapatha' is first found in a Vārttika<sup>39</sup> to the Pāṇinian rule 'kratūkthādisūtrāntāt dhak' (IV. 2. 60) where both Śatapatha (consisting of hundred paths) and Ṣaṣṭipatha (consisting of sixty paths) are mentioned. The Vārttika is formed with the object of showing that derivative nouns are formed from them in the sense of 'one who studies such works'. Now the mention of the word Ṣaṣṭipatha along with Śatapatha has led scholars like Weber and Eggeling to think that originally this Brāhmaṇa consisted of sixty adhyāyas; later additions gradually gave it the present final shape consisting of a hundred adhyāyas. It also follows from the above Vārttika

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38. Of the two recensions it is the Mādhyandina which actually consists of fourteen kāṇḍas which again are sub-divided into 100 adhyāyas. The other recension i.e. the Kāṇva has seventeen kāṇḍas, the adhyāyas numbering to 104 without the mention of the prapāṭhakas. The Brāhmaṇa-text of the Mādhyandina recension has been well-edited by Prof. Weber and an English translation of it by Eggeling is also available making any further attempt in this direction an useless repetition. The kāṇva recension also has been lately edited by W. Caland with an exhaustive introduction.

39. Ikanpadottarapadātsatasasṭeḥ śikanpathaḥ /

that at the time of Pāṇini (which is roughly about 6th century BC.) the work was well-known in its present form and it became the subject of study to a section of people. The name Śatapatha is again found in a gaṇa to Pāṇini (V. 3. 100),<sup>40</sup> but since it is included in the ākṛtigāṇa list, its evidence is doubtful. The name Śaṣṭipatha, if it actually refers to the original Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa consisting of sixty adhyāyas, may, according to Weber<sup>41</sup> and Eggeling,<sup>42</sup> refer to the first nine books of the Mādhyandina text of the Śatapatha which collectively consists of sixty adhyāyas. In that case, there is every possibility that the first nine books together were regarded as a complete work and studied as such. But nothing can be established definitely in this matter, because it is possible that the Vārttikakāra might have been acquainted with some other recension of the Brāhmaṇa-text which is now lost to us. The schools of the Vājasaneyins also are said to have been either fifteen or seventeen. But the existence of them, except only the two — the Kāṇva and the Mādhyandina are not available to us.

However, the first nine books of the Mādhyandina-recension reveal the characteristics of a composite text and presents a well-nigh complete picture of the sacrificial

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40. The rule is — *devapathādibhyaśca* / V. 3. 100, where the 'devapatha' class is ākṛtigāṇa and includes words like devapatha, hamsapatha, vāripatha etc. and also the word Śatapatha.

41. A. Weber — A History of Indian Literature, p. 119.

42. J. Eggeling — SBE, Vol. XII, p. XXIX.

system of ancient India. One more important fact is that it is the first nine Kāṇḍas that directly and systematically refer to the eighteen books of the Saṁhitā. They quote the separate verses in the same order as in the Saṁhitā and establish their connection with the ritual. It is in this sense that the Ś. Br. may be taken as a running commentary on the Śukla Yajuh Saṁhitā. The later five books (comprising 10-14) have more or less the character of a supplementary work. Their connection with the Saṁhitā is also only occasional. Thus the tenth kanda called Agni-rabasya which contains speculations on the significance of the ceremonies connected with the sacred fires, does not refer to any particular portion of the Saṁhitā. The eleventh kanda contains mostly repetition. The twelfth kanda is called Madhyama (the middle one). It gives an account of some expiatory ceremonies for the Agnihotra and the Soma-sacrifice. It however, refers to some verses of the Saṁhitā in connection with the Sautrāmaṇī sacrifice. The thirteenth kanda, in its discourse on the Aśvamedha (the Horse-sacrifice), Puruṣa-medha (Human sacrifice), Sarvamedha (the Universal sacrifice) and the funeral ceremonies, occasionally refers to some relevant verses of the Saṁhitā. The fourteenth Kāṇḍa is generally called Āraṇyaka and in its last six adhyāyas it contains the Brhadāraṇyaka. It is purely speculative and is a fine exegesis on philosophical doctrines; but in its earlier portions where it contains discussion about the Pravargya ceremony, it refers to the verses of the Saṁhitā.

Thus a glance at the contents of the last five books (X - XIV) obviously reveal their supplementary character. They seem to constitute a separate book and this is why the twelfth book has been rightly called the 'Madhyama'. The Mahābhārata also seems to have known about the last five books as later additions to the original Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa. Thus it has been stated there<sup>43</sup> that at the inspiration of the Sun, Yājñavalkya composed the Śatapatha, including the Rahasya (mystery), the Saṁgraha (summary) and the Parīśiṣṭa (supplement). We have already seen that the tenth book is actually called Agni-rahasya, and the eleventh is nothing but a summary of the previously described ceremonies. The last three books treat of various other topics and naturally bear the character of Parīśiṣṭa or supplementary works. Now if we connect the reference of the Mahābhārata with Patañjali's mention of the term 'Śaṣṭipatha' along with the term Śatapatha, then we can easily surmise with a considerable degree of certainty that at first the Brāhmaṇa comprised of sixty adhyāyas only. When the later portion was added, it came to be known as the Śatapatha, consisting of a hundred adhyāyas as an aggregated whole.

Some data of internal evidence too point out the succeeding character of the last five books. It has already been shown that their contents themselves bear sufficient testimony to the fact. The legends occurring in the last

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43. Mahābhārata, XII. 11734-9 ~~as the~~ ~~the~~ ~~the~~ ~~the~~.



five books are mostly of historical character connected with individual teachers who must have lived not very long ago, while in the previous books the legends are of a mythological character and refer to the incidents of remote antiquity. Rudra for the first time has been identified with Mahādeva in this portion. Viṣṇu also for the first time has come into prominence in the last book. Besides, many technical and philosophical terms are found in these books which are associated with the later period. The said terms, for example, are anūsāsana (ritual precept), vidyā (spiritual doctrine) and gāthā (strophe of a song); itihāsa and ākhyāna, vyākhyāna, anvākhyāna and upākhyāna in the sense of legend. The words *ekavacana* and *bahuvacana* are used in their later grammatical sense. A further difference between them is that the first nine books consistently use the <sup>expression,</sup> 'tasyoktaṁ bandhu' while, the last five 'tasyoktaṁ brāhmaṇam' in order to denote the same statement that 'the dogmatic explanation of a ceremonial has been fully treated of already'.

From what has been stated above it becomes evident that the last five books appear to be distinctly later. Now we like to examine the question of authorship. At the end of the Brāhmaṇa (XIV), the White Yajuh is said to have been promulgated by Yājñavalkya Vājasaneyā. In the first five books, he has been referred to as the teacher whose authority is decisive and final. But in books VI-X, which deal with Agnicayana, Yājñavalkya is not mentioned at all. There

Śāṇḍilya is regarded as the great authority. But because of such reference to Śāṇḍilya we should not assume that these books are totally immune from the influence of Yājñavalkya towards its composition. It is more probable that Yājñavalkya might have referred to Śāṇḍilya in his work as being a great authority on the rite of Agnicayana. In this connection it may be mentioned that Śāṇḍilya was recognised equally as an authority even by the Vājasaneyins. At the end of the Xth chapter we get a list of teachers where sacrificial science in general or the science of Fire-building in particular is said to have been transmitted from the God Prajāpati to Tura Kāvaseya downwards to Śāṇḍilya and from him downwards to a teacher named Sāmṣīvi-putra. After that the list is said to be identical probably with some other list. And at the end of the last kāṇḍa we actually get a list of the line of successive teachers of the science of Adhvaryu. In this list Yājñavalkya is mentioned as the eleventh and the two lists coincide starting from Sāmṣīvi-putra. Of the

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44. The two lists of teachers given at the end of Book X and Book XIV respectively are given below :

Book X : Brahman Svayambhu, Prajāpati, Tura Kāvaseya, Yājñavalkas Rājastambāyana, Kuśri, Śāṇḍilya, Vātsya, Vāmakakṣāyana, Māhitthi, Kautsa, Māṇḍavya, Māṇḍukāyāni, Sāmṣīvi-putra.

Book XIV : Āditya, Ambhīnī, Vāk, Kaśyapa Naidhruvi, Śilpa Kaśyapa, Harita Kaśyapa, Asita Vārṣagaṇa, Śihvāvat Bādhyoga, Vājaśravas, Kuśri, Upaveśi, Aruṇa, Uddālaka (Āruṇeya), Yājñavalkya Vājasaneya, Āsuri, Āsurāyana, Prāśnī-putra, Kāśakeyī-putra, Sāmṣīvi-putra.

two lists one has stressed the importance of Śāṇḍilya and the other that of Yājñavalkya. The two teachers Śāṇḍilya and Yājñavalkya seem to have been equally prominent in those days. Yājñavalkya while redacting the White Yajuh texts accepted the authority of Śāṇḍilya. The two schools, however, appear to have conjoined after Sāṁgīvi-putra.

### Importance of the Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa :

Let me now discuss some aspects of the importance of the Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa. The Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa is the most extensive of all the Brāhmaṇas. It also occupies the most significant position in the realm of Brāhmaṇical literature. According to the great Indologist Macdonell, it "is next to the R.V., the most important production in the whole range of Vedic literature."<sup>45</sup> Compared with the other Brāhmaṇical texts it shows its importance both as regards its extent as well as its contents.

Like every other species of Brāhmaṇa the Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa is concerned mainly with speculations on sacrifices. But as against the other Brāhmaṇas, it offers the most systematic specialization on the science of sacrifice. Being chiefly concerned with the duties of the Adhvaryu-priests, it deals with all the important sacrifices. Even the Taittirīya Brāhmaṇa which belongs to the other school

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45. A.A. Macdonell — A History of Sanskrit Literature, p. 212.

of the Yajurveda is less significant, because of its imperfections. The Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa on the other hand, begins with the Darśapūrṇamāseṣṭi, goes in details through the different forms of Somayāga — both ahīna and satra including the Paśu-yāga also, and records even some expiatory ceremonies. It has specially dealt with the performances to be done in connection with the sacred Fire. The process and significance of Agnicayana or the piling of bricks has received here a cosmogonic and theosophic treatment. Indeed the admiration of Winternitz for the importance of the Brāhmaṇa literature as a whole is justified largely and substantially on the well-nigh comprehensive character of the Śatapatha as a typical species of the Brāhmaṇa literature.<sup>46</sup>

But the sacrificial speculation is not the only interest of the Brāhmaṇa. Non-sacrificial topics have also received attention in the context of sacrificial details in this respect is more notable, for it contains many extraneous and useful matters. It affords us sufficient materials for reconstructing the history of the Aryans. In the first place it gives us definite geographical data regarding the progress of Aryan civilisation from the Northwest to the eastern regions in the post-Rgvedic period. The legend of Videgha Māthava (I. 4, 1, 10) which deserves to be mentioned in this context shows how the Aryans had

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46. M. Winternitz — A History of Indian Literature, Vol. I, Pt. I, p. 16.

advanced by spreading the cult of fire into the region of modern Bihar. Historical facts also abound in the Śatapatha Br. here and there and if they are analysed and critically assessed, they will be of much substantial value towards the reconstruction of the history of the age concerned. Many of the gāthās and nārāśamsīs found in this Brāhmaṇa appear to relate to historical persons and incidents. Thus Janamejaya Parīkṣit of the Kuru lineage, Para Ātnāra, the king of Kośāla, Bharata Dyausyanti of the great Bharata tribe are well-known celebrities in Indian tradition and they seem to possess a high degree of historical probability. The references to Āsandīvant (XIII. 5, 4, 2) as capital of Janamejaya, Parivakrā (XIII. 5, 4, 7) as capital of Kraivya Pāñcāla and Nadapit as the birth-place of Bharata have every appearance of historical reality. The fact that this Brāhmaṇa possesses a store of ancient legends many of which re-appear in the epics, proves its more intimate connection with the epics than the other Brāhmaṇas; on the other, it shows its acquaintance with the celebrated tribes of the kuru-pāñcālas and the neighbouring states like Kośāla-Videhas. Besides, we are informed here of other important tribes and states which became celebrated in the later Vedic period, such as the Matsyas (XIII. 5, 4, 9), the Śālvās (IX. 14, 1, 10), the Srñjayas (II. 4, 4, 5) and such many others. Important also are the two lists of succeeding Vedic teachers in the Śatapatha which contain forty-eight and sixty names

respectively.<sup>47</sup> Except a late Brāhmaṇa of the Sāmaveda (viz. the Vāṁśa Brāhmaṇa) it is the Śatapatha Br. alone that contains such Vāṁśa lists. These succession-lists are very important, because they undoubtedly possess some historical value. Even their compilation points to some historical background. It is evident from the Brāhmaṇa-text that gradually people began to indulge in disbelief about the efficacy of the sacrifice. The growing trend of this scepticism later attained its culmination in the revolt of Buddhism and Jainism was apprehended by the priestly authors. They tried to make their position strong and firm by tracing the successive line of tradition of the priestly teachers right back to the gods themselves, for example, Indra, Vāyu and even Prajāpati. Though this legendary connection with the mythological figures like Agni, Vāyu, etc. affects to some extent the historical authenticity, the tradition of the line of human teachers in the list cannot be set at naught on this account. There is rather strong probability that such and such teachers had a living tradition to the people who believed in it. The long period of time which the whole Brāhmaṇa-literature seems to cover and the names of the different authorities having been quoted on different occasions lend a stamp of historical probability to such lists.

Besides its occasional references to the geographical and historical background, this Brāhmaṇa-text gives us more information than the other Brāhmaṇas about the life and

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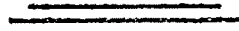
47. At the end of Book X and Book XIV, as mentioned earlier.

society of the Brāhmanical India. In spite of its religious character it is not devoid of social reflections. On the other hand, the vast range of knowledge and width of outlook displayed by the author covering the different aspects of human life give the Brāhmaṇa a rank of special dignity and importance beyond its sacrificial perview.

We have here also a glimpse of the position of the king and his authority together with other concepts of political importance. Philosophical speculations in this Brāhmaṇa far outnumber their counter-parts in the other Brāhmaṇas. Apart from the Brhadāranyaka Upaniṣad which is more properly a philosophical text, the actual Brāhmaṇa-portion also contains philosophical thoughts and ideas here and there. Truly speaking, this Brāhmaṇa-text is partly ritualistic and partly philosophical. In it we find well-developed systems of metaphysical, social and religious philosophy. At the same time it contains germs of most of the sciences and arts that developed to a high degree in the later period. In a word, the importance of this Brāhmaṇa lies in the fact that it has become the fountain-head of all knowledge. In comparison with the other Brāhmaṇa-texts its importance is still greater, because while the other Brāhmaṇas give us partial pictures of the post-Rgvedic Aryan, civilisation, the Śatapatha alone presents almost a complete picture of every aspect of Aryan minds. The Vedic literature comprises of many topics

and texts, but the two — the *Ṛ.V. Saṁhitā* and the *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa* stand as the two great land-marks of ancient genius.

In the succeeding chapters discussions will follow on the various aspects of Aryan life and thought and I refrain here from going into details.





RELIGIOUS CONDITIONIntroduction

The religion of the Brāhmanic period is nothing but a continued trend of the same as prevailed in the Rgvedic period. It is not a new stratum added to the old course of religion. But it is marked by some important changes which give it a distinctive character. We find here more or less the same gods and the same form of worship, though the character of both has changed to a considerable extent. In the Rgvedic times the form of religion was simple and more or less, like a nature myth. It was imbued with the spirit of adoring the gods who were mostly the personifications of the different aspects<sup>1</sup> of nature. The Vedic r̥sis believed that "the gods are propitiated and their vigour enhanced by prayer and praise."<sup>1</sup> There was surely the process of offering oblations to the gods but the process was simple. They thought that Agni or Fire was the mouth of the gods<sup>2</sup> and if something was offered in the fire in the name of the gods, the offering would be carried to them.<sup>3</sup> The gods, thus propitiated, would grant the offerer everything he prayed for or protect them by removing all calamities or forgive them their sins.

In the Brāhmanic age the atmosphere changes. Religion becomes here almost synonymous with sacrificial

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1. R.V. VIII. 12, 19-22.

2. R.V. VI. 7, 1.

3. Agni actually has the name Havyavāha or 'Oblation-bearer.'

performances. Sacrifice is recognised as the noblest act in the Brāhmaṇas (yajño hi śreṣṭhatamaṁ karma — T. Br., III. 2, 1, 4). It has a great dominating and pervasive influence on human life. Creation itself comes to be looked upon as the product of sacrifice on the part of the creator Prajāpati. The highest attainments of desired objects in human life are possible only through sacrifices. It has been conceived as a safe carrier which can take the sacrificer across all troubles.<sup>4</sup> It has been taken as the source of all purity.<sup>5</sup> What more, sacrifice is now thought to be soul of even the gods. Their divinity and immortality are reckoned here in terms of sacrifice.

This overall importance of the sacrifice naturally leads to the full growth of sacerdotalism in this age. At the same time it becomes formal to a great extent. It appears that there remains some controversy among scholars regarding the nature of the rituals in the Rgveda, whether it was too extensive as well as formal and rigid, but it is a fact beyond doubt that "the religion of the Brāhmaṇas was purely formal."<sup>6</sup> Too much importance is laid there on the correct performance of the details in a ritual. Excessive emphasis upon the trifles in a sacrifice sometimes

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4. Yajño vai sutarmā nauḥ / A.B. I. 3, 2.

5. sarvasmāt pāpmano nirmucyate ya evaṁ vidvan agnihotram juhoti / S. Br. II. 3, 1, 6.

6. S. Radhakrishnan, Indian Philosophy, Vol. I, p. 125.

appears to be more than the correctness of the rituals. It is interesting to quote the remark of Prof. Winternitz — "Whether an action is to be performed to the left or to the right, whether a pot is to be put in this or in that spot on the place of sacrifice, whether a blade of grass is to be laid down with the point to the north or to the north-east, whether the priest steps in front of the fire or behind it, in which direction he must have his face turned, into how many parts the sacrificial cake is to be divided, whether the ghee is to be poured into the northern or the southern half or into the centre of the fire, at which instant the repetition of a certain spell, the singing of a certain song has to take place — these are the questions upon which generations of masters of the art of sacrifice have meditated and which are treated in the most searching manner in the Brāhmaṇas."<sup>7</sup> According to the Brāhmaṇas the correct knowledge of all these details is essential, because a little deviation from the traditionally prescribed procedures of the rites is to be paid for dearly. Such over-importance attached to the forms makes the ritualism prevalent at the time of the Brāhmaṇas formal and at the same time to maintain the spirit of the sacrificial injunctions it appears to a certain extent mechanical as well. The priests also are, to some extent, responsible for the mechanical performance of rites in the Brāhmaṇical age. The fully developed institution of

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7. History of Indian Literature, Vol.I, pt.I, p. 172.

sacrifice in this age needs a large number of priests than those in the previous age. They are naturally intent on upholding their prestige intact and instead of emphasizing on the spirit they specially concentrate their mind upon the particular mode or the technique of the performance.

Again ritualism in the Brāhmaṇas is charged with a great degree of magic. The two terms religion and magic connote two different aspects of human mind.<sup>8</sup> But they often seem to be inextricably blended together in the Vedic ritual, particularly in the Brāhmaṇic period. Sometimes the Brāhmaṇical rites are apparently intended to produce magical ends. The rites are also often varied and full of trifling details for this purpose. It appears that at this time belief in the magical potency of sacrifice has to a certain extent substituted the simple attitude of devotion. In the

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8. Sir James George Frazer, in his famous book "The Golden Bough", Chapter IV, has tried to show the difference between 'Religion' and 'Magic' — "By religion I understand a propitiation or conciliation of powers superior to man which are believed to direct and control the course of nature and of human life. .... Magic, on the other hand, assumes that all personal beings whether human or divine, are in the last resort subject to those impersonal forces which control all beings, but which nevertheless can be turned to account by any one who knows how to manipulate them by the appropriate ceremonies and spells." (p. 222)

R̥gveda sacrificial offering was nothing but a means which along with high exaltation of the gods might please the gods who would fulfil the desire of the worshipper. But in the Brāhmanas sacrifices are no longer meant to persuade the gods to grant something to the worshipper. Such a belief is prevalent that if the sacrifice is performed correctly, it automatically would bring out the desired result. This tendency has to some extent changed the original character of the prayers. Thus in the later period Vedic prayer has sometimes been used as a medium of magical charm. Sometimes it seems unnecessary to understand the meaning of the mantras: only a mechanical repetition of the mantras with correct pronouncement is thought to bring about the desired result. Sacrifice is now like an end in itself, it is no mere means.

In this changed religious atmosphere when too much importance is laid on the correct performance of sacrificial rites the gods' position and character naturally become changed. Their sole importance is due to their connection with sacrifices. On the other hand, the priests who are eligible to perform those rites properly gradually rise to the dignity of almost gods (manuṣya-devāḥ).<sup>9</sup> The highly elaborate nature of the rituals at this period also needs priests' special training. Consequently priesthood gradually becomes to be hereditary and professional.

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9. S. Br. II. 2, 2, 6; II. 4, 3, 14.

But in spite of all its rigidity, subtlety and formalism, it cannot be gainsaid that the religion of the Brāhmanas has never totally lost sight of its spirit. Even if it sometimes appears to be magical it is never out and out magical. The scholars who took that "the sacrifice in the Brāhmanas is a piece of magic pure and simple,"<sup>10</sup> appear to have been misled by the staunch belief of the authorities of the Brāhmanas in the efficacy of the ritual to produce the desired result. The distinctive spheres of magic and religion have been brought about by Dr. Deshmukh in the following lines: "When the powers were conceived as coercible it led to magic; when they were conceived as uncoercible and their favour was sought by means of praising, praying and offering gifts to them, it led to religion."<sup>11</sup> The Brāhmanic sacrifice, however mechanical and formal it may be, never seems to be coercive. The gods are not compelled to bestow gifts. It is the correct performance of a particular act which is believed to have extolled such blessings. Besides even in the Brāhmanas the gods are often solicited to show favour to men; and the priesthood, though claiming for itself a divine dignity, generally lacks no morality. On the whole, though full of trifling externals and mechanical repetitions, sacrifice is often conceived in the Brāhmanas as an organic whole. The Ś. Br. specially testifies to it.<sup>12</sup> Again in the whole

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10. A.B. Keith, Religion and Philosophy of the Veda and the Upanisads, Vol. II, p. 454.

11. Origin and Development of Religion in Vedic Literature, p. 47.

12. This has been dealt in details later.

Brāhmaṇa literature the conception of Prajāpati as the sole creator of both the asuras and the gods shows that behind the ritualistic plurality there is always a monotheistic tendency. Sometimes the conception of Brahman<sup>13</sup> as the creative principle of the world<sup>13</sup> carries us to the philosophical truth set forth in the Upaniṣads. Indeed the Brāhmaṇas give us ample references which prove that in the Brāhmaṇical religion in addition to the mechanical formalism there is always another current of spiritualism. In fact this second trend substitutes reverence for actual offering. In the Aitareya Brāhmaṇa it has been said that "the sacrificer attains immortality through the invisible mental offering."<sup>14</sup> This spiritual outlook of the Brāhmaṇa-authors shows the beginning of the symbolical philosophy of the Āraṇyakaś and results finally into the doctrine of knowledge in the Upaniṣads.

In my discussion about the religions condition as revealed in the S. Br., I propose to touch upon the important changes that were introduced in the course of religious evolution under the following heads —  
(a) Sacrifice, (B) Priests, and (C) Gods.

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13. Cf. S. Br. XI. 2, 3, 1.

14. A. Br. II. 7, 4: yā vai kāsca aśarīrā āhutayaḥ  
amṛtatvameva tābhir yajamāno jayati /

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## RELIGIOUS CONDITION — SACRIFICE

### The Theory of Sacrifice.

In the introductory discussion it has been pointed out that Sacrifice is the central theme round which all thoughts of the Brāhmaṇa-writers move and the Ś. Br. also is no exception to this. Verily the sacrifice is all-important here and it has been expressly stated to be the best act ever performed — yajño vai śreṣṭhatamaṁ karma /<sup>1</sup> To speak metaphorically, it is like a ship sailing heaven-ward.<sup>2</sup> The Śat. Brāhmaṇa enjoins that sacrifice is a compulsory duty for a man. Man is bound to perform sacrifices, because he, from the very birth, owes a debt to the gods and he must satisfy them by offering sacrificial oblation in the fire.<sup>3</sup> In another place the Brāhmaṇa observes that man by his own self is born as a debt to death and in that he sacrifices, thereby he redeems himself from death.<sup>4</sup> Again initiation into sacrificial rites is considered in this Brāhmaṇa to be a second birth to the sacrificer.<sup>5</sup> Thus the performance of sacrifices make a man twice-born (dvija).

1. Ś. Br. I. 7, 1, 5.

2. Yajño nauḥ svargyā / Ś. Br. IV. 2, 5, 10.

3. sa yena devebhya ṛṇaṁ jāyate / taḍenāṁ stadavaḍayate  
yad yajate atha yadāḡṇau juhōti taḍenāṁ stadavaḍayate  
..... / Ś. Br. I. 7, 2, 6.

4. ṛṇaṁ ha vai puruṣo jāyamāna eva / mṛtyor ātmnā jāyate  
sa yad yajate yathaiva tat suparnī devebhya ātmānaṁ  
nirakrīṇī-taivamevaiṣa etan mṛtyor ātmānaṁ niṣkrīṇīte /  
S. Br. III. 6, 2, 16

5. Cf. Ś. Br. III. 2, 1, 40.



The sacrifice is not merely the most glorious work, but also an all-powerful one. According to the Śat. Br. attainment of all desired objects rests in sacrifice. This was common to Gods and ṛsis alike.<sup>6</sup> Once and again the Brāhmaṇa-text says that sacrifice leads one to the world of heaven. Thus "he who has sacrificed shares the world of bliss."<sup>7</sup> Not only the mortal beings but even the gods also attained their divine glory and heavenly status by means of sacrifice. To quote the Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa — "By worshipping with it (sacrifice) they became the gods they are now."<sup>8</sup> Also — "The gods went on worshipping and toiling with the same (sacrifice) by which they had ascended the heaven".<sup>9</sup> Not only heaven, the gods attained immortality also by performing sacrifice.<sup>10</sup> Thus following the trend of the mechanical sacerdotalism of the Brāhmaṇical period, when the sacrifice is the prime factor of attaining worldly prosperity as well as heavenly bliss, the Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa also stands no exception to this.

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6. yajñena ha sma vai taddevāḥ kalpayante yadeṣāṁ  
kalpayāmāsarsayas'ca / Śat. Br. II. 4, 3, 3.

7. tasmādāhuḥ punyaloka ājāna iti / Śat. Br. III. 6, 2, 15.

8. devā ayajanta tenestvaitadābhavan yadidaṁ devāḥ /  
Śat. Br. I. 5, 2, 6.

9. sa yenaiva devā divamupodakrāman / teno'evārcantah  
śrāmyantas'ceruratha . . . . . / Śat. Br. I. 7, 3, 2.

10. yajñena vai devāḥ / imāṁ jitiṁ jigyuḥ . . . . . /  
Śat. Br. III. 1, 4, 3.

Even the creation of the world has been explained there as through sacrifice. Already in the R̥gveda we hear of the cosmic sacrifice which was performed even before the dawn of creation and in which the one great God, the Primal Being called Puruṣa offered Himself as havis or oblation.<sup>11</sup> This Primal Being known as Puruṣa later assumes the name of Prajāpati in the Brāhmaṇas. He is the source of creation there and he created the universe after practising austere penance.<sup>12</sup> Thus the idea of sacrifice (either it is the self-sacrifice of Puruṣa or the practice of penance on the part of Prajāpati) remains as the source of creation. The Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa also says explicitly that "all beings are born of the sacrifice."<sup>13</sup>

Sacrifice, no doubt, is a well-established institution in the age of the Brāhmaṇas and hence the Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa does not help much as to its primitive origin. This may apparently be corroborated by the various stories and anecdotes in the Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa where it tries to explain the origin of the sacrifice in general or of a particular rite in various ways without any satisfactory conclusion thereto.

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11. Cf. R.V. X. 90.

12. S. Br. II. 2, 4, 1 ff; II. 5, 1, 1 ff.

13. yajñād vai prajāḥ prajāyante / S. Br. I. 9, 2, 5.

However, the stories in the Śātapatha Brāhmaṇa regarding the origin of sacrifice are interesting. Prajāpati remains to be the main source of sacrifice in these and he again, himself has been identified with sacrifice. Thus ~~in~~<sup>the</sup> Śātapatha Brāhmaṇa, XI. 1, 8, 3 we find that after giving himself to the Gods Prajāpati created his counterpart (pratimā) viz. the sacrifice. Prajāpati is also said to have discovered the sacrifice. This can be supported by the text where the Śātapatha Brāhmaṇa states the origin of Agnīhotra-offerings — "When Prajāpati wanted to create beings he practised penance and created fire. But as there was no food for the fire, Prajāpati became afraid that the fire would consume him. So he rubbed his hands, produced ghee and milk and offered them to Agni. But Agni was not satisfied. Prajāpati rubbed his hands again but began to doubt whether to offer or not. Then he offered at the direction of his own greatness (mahimā) with the utterance of svāhā."<sup>14</sup>

In other contexts Prajāpati has been described to have given the sacrifice to the gods<sup>15</sup> or the gods are said to have obtained the sacrifice by praising and practising austerities.<sup>16</sup> Having obtained it, the gods tried to overcome the difficulties and to make the sacrifice firm.

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14. Ś. Br. II. 2, 4, 1-6.

15. Ś. Br. V. 1, 1, 1.

16. Ś. Br. IV. 2, 4, 11-12.

Legends show that gods not only preserved the sacrifice but they also took part in its development. That there was a substratum of evolution in the idea of sacrifice is shown by the text that while Prajāpati saw the first layer of the fire-altar, the Gods saw the second and Indra, Agni and Visvakarman saw the third layer, the seers the fourth and Parames̥ṭhī the fifth.<sup>17</sup>

The Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa also does not say anything very definitely how the tradition of the sacrifice and the sacrificial rites became popular among men. It has ~~been~~ been said that though the gods tried much to hide the sacrifice from men they were unable to do it. The seers obtained the sacrifice by praising and toiling, produced it and spread it. This tradition of sacrifice is taught by the older to the younger, by the father to the son and thus it progresses.<sup>18</sup> The passage Ś. Br. I. 5, 2, 7 similarly testifies to the continuity of the tradition of sacrifice in the Brāhmaṇical period — "Even as people hand on from the one to the other a full vessel, in the same way the priests hand down the sacrifice from the one to the other. They hand it down by means of speech. They keep up the tradition by means of it."<sup>19</sup>

17. Ś. Br. VI. 2, 3, 10.

18. Ś. Br. I. 6, 2, 1ff.

19. yathā pūrṇapātreṇa saṃpradāyaṃ careyu revamānena'  
rtvijāḥ saṃpradāyaṃ caranti tad vācāivaitat saṃpradāyaṃ  
caranti vāgdhi yajño vāgu hi retastadetenāivaitat  
saṃpradāyaṃ caranti /

On the whole, on the basis of the legends found in the Brāhmaṇas this much can be said that the origin of the tradition of sacrifice is unknown even to the authors of the Brāhmaṇas and so they attribute the same to either Prajāpati or to gods.<sup>20</sup> The seers of old found it by continuous toil (search) and since then the tradition continues from generation to generation. It is also clear from all references that though sacrifice is an established tradition it is not at all static; it is far more dynamic. It is still undergoing changes in different stages by additions and alterations. And the Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa stands to be the foremost in respect of giving the best information as to the gradual growth or rather changes through which the sacerdotal tradition in ancient India had undergone. It is from here that we know that sacrifice is, on the one hand, expanding over new areas and on the other, it is always developing in respect of details as well as the main idea. The legend of Māthava, the king of Videgha, carrying Agni Vaiśvānara<sup>21</sup> clearly points out the eastward migration of the Aryans along with their fire-cult.

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20. The repeated attempt of the Brāhmaṇa to trace the origin and the later development of the sacrifice to Prajāpati and the gods respectively, is nothing but to give supreme greatness to the concept of the sacrifice.

21. S. Br. I. 4, 1, 10ff.

The growth and progress of the sacrifice is not always the picture reflected in the Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa. Side by side there are also the references which show that sacrifice sometimes met hard days also. Thus there are a few legends which tell us that sacrifice went away from the gods on several occasions and was restored by some means or others.<sup>22</sup> Further the Brāhmaṇa has also directly referred to the unbelief regarding the use of the performance of sacrifice which sometime took hold of men : "Those who sacrifice, become sinful; and those who do not sacrifice, they become prosperous."<sup>23</sup> Of course Brhaspati later approached them and persuaded them to continue the performance. In another place also Brhaspati is said to have helped the gods in driving away the asuras who made disturbance to the performance of sacrifice.<sup>24</sup> So we can easily surmise that occasionally there arise some difficulties regarding the performance of sacrifices but they are soon averted by some means and sacrifice continued as usual. The same is the case where sacrifice is said to have been exhausted.<sup>25</sup> Gods were very much anxious to replenish the sacrifice, to render it more efficient and practise with it when it was exhausted. They sprinkled the havis-dishes with the butter with which they had established the sacrifice and which was left in the juhu,

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22. Ś. Br. I. 1, 4, 1ff.; III. 4, 1, 17.

23. ye yajante pāpiyāṃsas te bhavanti ya u na yajanti  
śreyāṃsas te bhavanti / Ś. Br. I. 2, 5, 24.

24. Ś. Br. IX. 2, 3, 2-3.

25. Ś. Br. I. 5, 3, 24.

and thereby revived them again and rendered them efficient.

Along with gradual development some new practices are being adopted in the sacrificial system either as additions to the older ones or as substitute for them. In various places of the Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa, Yājñavalkya has not only referred to the older views but has refuted same and has established his own view. The Ś. Br. also gives indication that sometimes some rites of the popular nature or even rites from the ritual of the non-Aryan people are being gradually incorporated in the ritual of the Vedic Aryans.<sup>26</sup> Again this Brāhmaṇa records some cases which show that many details of previous sacrificial performances have become altered or are prescribed in a different manner in the later Brāhmaṇa period. Thus the passage (Ś. Br. I. 1, 4, 11-13) tells us that in the ancient times the wife of the sacrificer used to rise to act in answer to the call for preparing the oblation material. But at the time of the Ś. Br., she or someone else rises to act. Another passage (Ś. Br., VI. 2, 1, 37) states that formerly five animals viz. the man, the horse, the bull, the ram and the he-goat were slaughtered and their heads were used in the fire-altar building. Ś. Br. VI. 2, 1, 39 adds that now-a-days not all the five

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26. The Sautrāmaṇī sacrifice has been described in the Ś. Br. (XII. 9, 3, 7) as belonging to the Asuras in the beginning and only later it was obtained by the gods.

but only two are slaughtered. Again we learn that previously the Brahman priesthood belonged to the Vasiṣṭha family. But at the time of the S. Br. any one who knows the vyāhrtis can be the Brahman priest at the sacrifice.<sup>27</sup> Thus it is quite evident from these references that the cycle of the sacrificial system is ever on the move and in course of moving it is always growing and developing to its full fledge at the time of the Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa.

At the same time, the Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa, like all other Brāhmaṇas, lays supreme emphasis on the flawless performance of the rites. Any flaw in the performance or any violation of the proper course of the sacrificial code would result in sins. Of course there are some expiatory rites prescribed in the Brāhmaṇas themselves to make up the errors committed unintentionally in the course of performance; yet the general trend of this period is to stress on the correct performance of all details in a sacrificial rite. Again at the time of the Brāhmaṇas, the office of the Brahman-priest is no less than a guardian to guard against any irregularities in performance of the rites. This also points out the importance laid on the flawless performance in those days. The Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa mentions several instances of penalty for lapses in correct performances. Generally the priests are responsible for the

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27. S. Br. XII. 6, 1, 41.



correctness or otherwise of the sacrificial performance, because being employed by the sacrificer it is they who do all the sacrificial works. At I. 7, 3, 19 we hear about a priest, Bhāṭṭabeya who deviated from the proper course of the sacrifice by making the invitatory formula an anuṣṭubh verse and the offering-formula a triṣṭubh verse and result was — he fell from the cart and broke his arm. Another priest Āṣāḍhi Saṁśrāmateya had to die for his error. In the building of the fire-altar he did not put those five heads beneath as prescribed; instead he picked up other five heads and thus violated the proper code.<sup>28</sup> Not only the priests, the sacrificer also has to suffer due to the wrong performance. There are instances in the Brāhmaṇas that sometimes the priests themselves being somehow displeased with the sacrificer may harm him by wrongly performing the sacrifice. The Śat. Brāhmaṇa has indirectly warned against such priests in the following lines — "The sacrifice is like a boat sailing heavenward; if there be a sinful priest in it, that one priest would make it sink", (naur ha vā eṣā svargyā . . . . . eka eva majjayitā ya eva nindyah . . . . . S. Br. V. 2, 5, 10).

All this may show the machination in which ritualism becomes more important than true religion in the Brāhmaṇical period. But in spite of all its mechanical sacerdotalism and its external paraphernalia, the sacrifice has its own

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28. S. Br. VI. 2, 1, 37.

spirit in which it is imbued with true religion. Particularly in the Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa, sacrifice is never fully mechanical. It is the greatest work here. It has been identified with greatness ('yajño vai mahimā' — II. 3, 1, 18) and happiness ('yajño vai sumnam' — VII. 3, 1, 34). In many places the Brāhmaṇa itself has tried to bring out the exact form of the sacrifice. Thus in one place (III. 1, 4, 1) sacrifice is said to have two forms — the occult one and the direct one. The former refers to the muttering of the sacred formula and the latter points to the libation offered to the deities. Elsewhere again sacrifice is said to consist of the ṛk and the yajus formulae and the oblations. Sacrifice is also sometimes said to comprise oblation and the dakṣiṇā; sometimes cooked oblation and altar and sometimes ghee and rice offering. In all these cases, of course, nothing new is added except devising the formal nature of the sacrifice as consisting of two or more important factors in the sacrifice. More interesting is the personification of yajña in which some particular part or detail of a sacrifice has been described as forming a limb of its body. Thus at I. 4, 4, 8 the two āghāras are said to form the root and the head of the body; at III. 2, 3, 20 Ātithyeṣṭi is said to be the head of the Soma Sacrifice and the opening and the closing libations are conceived as the two arms; similarly at III. 4, 4, 1, Pravargya is

said to be the head and the Upasads the neck respectively. Such partial identifications are very frequent in the Śat. Brāhmaṇa, but complete metaphors are also not wanting there. Indeed sacrifice in the Ś. Br. is neither only formal or mechanical; it is an organic whole. It has been identified there with Puruṣa or a living being<sup>29</sup> and the different aspects of sacrifice are compared to different limbs. Thus, while describing sacrifice as a Puruṣa, the Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa says that "its head is Havirdhānam; its mouth is Āhavanīya. The sacrificial stake is no other than his crest lock; and the Āgnīdhriya and Mārjālīya are his two arms. The Sadas (tents for the priests) is no other than his belly and the two fires which are behind it are his feet.<sup>30</sup> Besides, sacrifice has also been identified with Prajāpati<sup>31</sup> in this Brāhmaṇa and Prajāpati is the creator of everything human or divine. In the symbolical description of Agnicayana in the Śat. Brāhmaṇa

29. puruṣo vai yajñah / Ś. Br. I. 3, 2, 1.

The reason why the sacrifice has been identified with puruṣa is that in being spread, the sacrifice is made just as large as a man — esa vai tāyamāno yāvaneva puruṣas tāvan vidhīyate (III. 5, 3, 6).

30. śira evāśya havir dhānam / ..... mukham evāśyāhavanīyah / ..... stupa evāśya yūpah / bāhū evāśyāgnīdhriyaśca mārjālīyaśca / udaram evāśya sadaḥ / ..... atha yāvetau jaghanen āgnī pādāvevāśyaitāveṣa ..... etc. Ś. Br. III. 5, 3, 1-6.

31. Ś. Br. I. 1, 1, 13; XI. 6, 3, 9.

this Prajāpati has been identified with Agni<sup>32</sup> as the erection of the fire-altar symbolises the world-creation. Sacrifice is also identified with yajamāna<sup>33</sup> i.e. the man who performs the sacrifice or who is the lord of sacrifice (i.e. yajñapati) and thus the equation of sacrifice, Agni, Prajāpati and Yajamāna is complete. The sacrifice is further equated with Viṣṇu, the supreme deity<sup>34</sup> who pervades the universe and this identification shows at the same time the most honoured position of the sacrifice and its symbolical identification with the universe.

Again in the Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa, not merely the creation of the world is attributed to sacrifice, but the conception of a generative process is also frequently associated with it. While giving the etymology of the word 'yajña' the Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa makes it connected with the conception of generation — "when they press him, they slay him; and when they spread him they cause him to be born. He is born in being spread along; he is born moving (yan jāyate). Hence yañja; for yañja they say yajña."<sup>35</sup>

32. Ś. Br. VI. 1, 1, 5.

33. Ś. Br. IX. 5, 2, 16.

34. Ś. Br. I. 1, 2, 13; I. 7, 1, 21; I, 9, 3, 9; III. 6, 3, 3.

35. ghnanti vā enametaḥ yadabhiṣunvanti tad yadenam<sup>tanvate</sup> tadenam janayanti sa tāyamāno jāyate sa yan jāyate tasmā yāñjo yāñjo ha vai nāmaitaḥ yad yajña iti /

Ś. Br. III. 9, 4, 23.

<sup>2</sup>But sacrifice is not only generated, it is the generator. The Brāhmaṇa-text while enjoining or describing the performance of any rite, mentions also the result which is due to the sacrificer. Among the various results assured to the sacrificer, we find good offspring as a result which is obtained by performing many rites. Thus the Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa while explaining the reason why the Patnīsamāyas are to be offered at the end of the Darsapūrnāmāsa says that "from the sacrifice offsprings are assuredly produced; those offsprings produced from the sacrifice are produced from couple (mithune) and the offsprings produced from pair are produced after the completion of the sacrifice."<sup>36</sup> In other places (III. 2, 1, 1; XI. 2, 1, 1) the sacrificer has been said to be born out of the sacrifice. Thus sacrifice as a generative process is an established conception at the time of the Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa and the Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa accordingly shows a tendency to establish a pair of male and female somehow or other in any particular rite, because it is from the pair that generation takes place.<sup>37</sup> Generally the male or female qualities have been endowed upon anything on the basis of the grammatical gender. Thus in the samīṣṭa-yajus performance the altar is cleansed by means of the

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36. ya jñādvai prajāḥ prajāyante ya jñāt prajāyamānā  
mithunāt prajāyante mithunāt prajāyamānā antato  
yajñasya prajāyante ... etc. / S. Br. I. 9, 2, 5.

37. mithunād vai prajātiḥ / S. Br. IX. 4, 1, 5.

grass-bunch; the altar (vedī-feminine) is the female and the grass-bunch (veda-masculine) is the male and they thus form a productive pair. In the Agni-hotra ceremony six pairs have been described — the sacrificer (yajamāna-masculine) and his wife (patnī-feminine), the calf (yatsa-masculine) and the Agnihotra-cow (agnihotrī - feminine), the pot (sthālī - feminine) and the coals (aṅgārah - masculine), the offering spoon (sruk - feminine) and the dipping spoon (sruvā - masculine), āhavanīya fire (masculine) and the log (samīdh - feminine) and libation (āhuti - feminine) and svāhākāra (masculine). The ideology of the Śātapatha Brāhmaṇa, in course of dealing with different kinds of rituals, not only describes here and there in the form of productive pair by conceiving male and female but also often uses the comparison with the process of human progeny. All this definitely points to the conclusion that the idea of the sacrifice in the Śātapatha Brāhmaṇa is that of a generative process and not a mere mechanical process for gaining the desired result.

Truly speaking, the Śātapatha Brāhmaṇa never holds the notion that sacrifice is a mere mechanical process; on the other hand, it has again and again conceived sacrifice as a complete whole and many minor details have been emphasized there only in order to achieve completion or perfection in the sacrifice. For instance in the Darsā-pūrṇamāsa sacrifices the sacrificer has to take a black

antelope-skin for perfection of the sacrifice itself ('yaज्ञasya sarvatvāya' — I. 1, 4, 1). It is further enjoined that while the cows are being milked, a drop of water which the milker has used, is poured into the milk. Thereby the sapping begets perfection ('rasasya sarvatvāya' — I. 7, 1, 18). Such descriptions are numerous in the text and show that sacrifice with all its details is always supposed to be a self-complete entity in the Śat. Brāhmaṇa. All these details are nothing but means to the end.

On the whole, sacrifice in the Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa does not mean merely a juxta-position of meaningless formalities of ceremonies as some scholars might have suggested; it has a deeper significance at bottom in which we can discern a quiet yet persistent yearning for a moral and spiritual life. Unlike the earlier Brāhmanical texts like the Aitareya Brāhmaṇa, the Kauṣītaki Brāhmaṇa or the Jaiminīya Brāhmaṇa, the Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa shows a clear tendency to transcend the mere formalism of rites; occasionally here flashes forth from behind the thick cloud of ritualism the glow of religious spirit imbued with truth, knowledge and reverence. In many places the actual rigid performance has been replaced by symbolic performances. In the Darśapūrṇamāsa sacrifice the actual Sāman-singing may be replaced by the utterance of the sacred syllable 'Om' and the Brāhmaṇa states that thereby the 'entire

sacrifice becomes endowed with the Sāman'. Again the symbolical manner of performing the Darśapūrṇamāsa sacrifices has been stated in the Brāhmaṇa as making offerings to the mind and speech respectively, for mind is the full moon and speech the new moon.<sup>38</sup> The importance of śraddhā is also well-established and it is implied that śraddhā is the foundation of the sacrifice. Thus says Yājñavalkya in reply to Janaka that if there is nothing material to offer then 'truth' (satya) is to be offered in faith (śraddhā).<sup>39</sup> At XII. 1, 3, 23 it has been said that śraddhā along with satya, śrama, tapas, yajña and āhutiś can give the same result of the sacrificial session actual physical offering. At the same time the importance of knowledge is recognised in the Brāhmaṇa and mere physical performance does not suffice to achieve the ultimate object without full knowledge of the same ritualistic rites. Many times we find in the Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa stresses laid upon the true knowledge of the rite along with the physical performance. As an instance we may refer to the text where Śauceya Prācīnayogya speaks

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38. S. Br. XI. 2, 4, 8: sa yaṁmanasā āghārayati mano vai pūrṇamāstena pūrṇamāsaṁ yajatyatha yaṁ vāca āghārayati vāgvai darśastena darśaṁ yajatyateno hāsyā darśapūrṇamāsāviṣṭau bhavataḥ /

39. S. Br. XI. 3, 1, 4 : na vā iha tarhi kiṁ canā-sīdathaitadahūyataiva satyaṁ śraddhāyāmiti /



to Uddālaka Āruṇi, "If thou hast offered the Agnihotra knowing this (for example, why the spoon is shaken after the offering etc.) then it has indeed been offered by thee; but if (thou hast offered it) not knowing this, then it has not been offered by thee."<sup>40</sup>

Finally we sometimes have in the Śat. Brāhmaṇa clear statement that knowledge alone is the important factor and that mere rituals do not help us to attain the highest goal.<sup>41</sup> Such infrequent references at least show the trend that even among the external paraphernalia of Brāhmanical ritualism, spiritualism is gradually gaining its foothold. It seems quite possible that there are free-thinkers all the time who uphold the cause of spiritualism which becomes fully developed in the later Upaniṣadic texts. This also leads us to the conclusion that the Upaniṣadic speculations are but natural development of the spiritualism found in the Brāhmaṇas. The Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa again of all the Brāhmaṇas marks this transitional stage more clearly than others.

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40. yadi vā etadvidvānagnihotramahaṣṭī ratha te hantam  
yadyu vā avidvānahutameva ta iti / Ś. Br. XI. 5, 3, 4.

41. Ś. Br. X. 5, 4, 16: vidyayā tadārohanti yatra kāmāḥ  
parāgatāḥ / na tatra dakṣiṇā yanti nāvidvānāsasta-  
pasvinaḥ .... / "By knowledge they ascent that (state)  
where desires have vanished; dakṣiṇās do not go thither;  
nor the fervid practisers of rites without knowledge."

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## II

Varieties of Sacrifice :

From the previous discussions it is evident that sacrifice as a full-fledged institution is firmly established in the age of the Brāhmaṇas, and this is particularly revealed in the Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa. The two main divisions of the Vedic rituals are the śrauta and grhya sacrifices. Of these the Śrauta sacrifices which demonstrate the use of the three fires,<sup>42</sup> constitute the main theme of the Brāhmaṇa works. The Vedic texts have sometimes tried to classify the Śrauta rites according to the nature of the materials offered as oblations. The Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa observes that there are two kinds of oblations viz. the Soma-oblation and the butter-oblation. Of them the Soma-oblation is an oblation by itself; and the butter-oblation is an offering of the articles of havis (rice, milk, etc.) as well as the offering of animals.<sup>43</sup> A further difference is that in the Soma-offering the recitation of the Sāmans is essential, while in the butter-oblation Sāma-recitation is not needed. The Aitareya Brāhmaṇa mentions three kinds of oblations — "Oblations of fire, butter and Soma".<sup>44</sup> It also appears from the Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa that the sacrifice was probably conceived as five-fold, for it mentions sacrifice as pāṅkta.<sup>45</sup> The Aitareya Āraṇyaka

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42. viz. āhavanīya, gārhapatya and dakṣiṇāgni.

43. Ś. Br. I. 7, 2, 10.

44. Ait. Br. II. 7, 4

45. pāṅkto vai yajñah / Ś. Br. I. 1, 2, 16. This is substantiated by Śāyana's commentary - yajño dhānākarambhādi-  
pañcāhaviṣka itī pañcasamkhyāyogāsānyāt pāṅktaḥ.

distinctly mentions the five kinds of sacrifice as Agnihotra, Darsápurṇamāsa, Cāturmāsya, Paśu and Soma.<sup>46</sup>

In the Śrauta-sūtras the principle of distinction bears upon division of the sacrifice as Prakṛti and Vikṛti. Prakṛti is the model or base from which the modus operandi or procedures are utilised towards performance of the Vikṛti. Thus Agnihotra, Darsápurṇamāsa, Prājāpatya paśu and Agniṣṭoma are the models of the four kinds of sacrifices viz. Homa, Iṣṭi, Paśu and Soma respectively. With these we may add Gavāmayana as the model of the Satra-type of sacrifice (which is nothing but a form of Soma-sacrifice extending over one year or more for its completion).

#### Agnihotra :

In the early Vedic age the performance of Agnihotra or the Fire-god oblation was an obligatory sacrificial duty for the higher three varṇas. It consists of oblations of milk, curd, rice etc. offered to the Sun-god and Agni in the sacrificial fire in the morning and evening respectively. The remainder of this offering is given over to the Wind-god Vāyu (II. 2, 4, 17). It is a life-long sacrificial duty for one who has properly set up the sacred fire. The Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa (XII. 4, 1, 1) says that "those who offer Agnihotra indeed enter upon a long sacrificial session; Agnihotra

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46. Ait. Āraṇyaka, II. 3, 3 : sa eṣa yajñah pañcaviḍhōgni-hotram darsápurṇamāsau cāturmāsyaṇi paśuḥ somah /

indeed is a satra that ends with old age or death, since he (sacrificer) becomes free from it only by old age or death."<sup>47</sup>

Difference of opinions is noticed among the authorities regarding the precise time of the morning offering i.e. whether the offering is to be made just before or just after the rising of the sun in the morning. The Śātapatha Brāhmaṇa, however, prefers the offering in the morning before sun-rise, because it is said to usher in the rise of the sun.<sup>48</sup> The evening oblation is offered at a time when the sun has set and in this regard there is no controversy. The fires are kept perpetually alight or are culled daily from the Gārhapatya fire before the setting of the sun (II. 3, 1, 7-8). Two libations are offered; the first one in the evening is offered to Agni with the text — 'agnir jyotiḥ jyotir agniḥ svāhā' (Agni is the light, the light is Agni, Svāhā). The second libation is offered to Sūrya in the morning with the text — 'Sūryo jyotiḥ jyotiḥ sūryaḥ, svāhā' (Sūrya is the light, the light is Sūrya, Svāhā).<sup>49</sup> The second offering is

47. dīrghasatram ha vā eta upayanti ye 'gnihotram juhvatyetadvai jarāmaryaṁ satraṁ yadagnihotram jarayā vāva hyevāsmān mucyate mṛtyunā vā //

48. Ś. Br. II. 3, 1, 5.

49. The Ś. Br. explains the significance of the sacred texts in such context as follows — sa juhoti / agnirjyotir-jyotirgniḥ svāhetiyatha prātaḥ sūryo jyotirjyotiḥ sūryaḥ svāheti tat satyenaiva hūyate yadā hyeva sūryo'stametya-thāgnirjyotir yadā sūrya udetyatha sūryo jyotir yadvai satyena hūyate tad devān gacchati / "Thus offering is

indeed equivalent to the Svistakṛt, since it is offered on the north part of the fire and that is the region of the Svistakṛt (II. 3, 1, 23; I. 7, 3, 20). The main offering is made with milk which is heated on the Gārhapatya in an earthen vessel. Some water is poured into it with the sruvā for the sake of appeasement. Then the Adhvaryu takes milk four times with the sruvā into a ladle called the Agnihotrahavanī, made of the vikankata wood. He then takes a kindling-stick (Samidh) and hastens up to the Āhavanīya with the ladle to make the libation on the burning stick. He offers the first oblation (pūrvāhuti) without putting down the offering spoon beside the fire and then the second one after putting it down (II. 3, 1, 17). After the libations are completed the milk left in the ladle is drunk up by the Adhvaryu.

With the offering of the Agnihotra libations may be performed the ceremony of homage to the deities viz. Indra, king Yama, Nāda the Naisadha (King), Anasat, Sāṅgamana and Asat Pāṁsava. These deities are none but the different forms of Fire-god and hence the function of rendering homage to them is known as Agniyupasthāna (literally, standing near the fires). At the end of the performance the sacrificer mentions his son's name as his successor in his duty. If he be

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made with the truth; for truly, when the sun goes down, then Agni (fire) is the light, and when the sun rises, then Sūrya (Sun) is the light; and whatever is offered with the truth, that indeed, goes to the gods." (II. 3, 1, 30).

sonless, he should insert his own name.

The Agnihotra or the Fire-god oblation is surely an old rite. It probably had a popular origin from the necessity of the maintenance of fire in everybody's house. The Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa itself regards the Agnihotra as a type of domestic sacrifice (pāka-yaज्ञा) and not as the <sup>51</sup>'haviryaज्ञा'. However the Agnihotra attained much prominence in the Brāhmaṇic age and Yājñavalkya has described its importance among the Śrauta rituals with a fine simile — "what the arrow-head is to the arrow, that the Agnihotra is <sup>52</sup>to sacrifices." It is also conceived as a means of release from death and it is like a ship that sails heaven-<sup>53</sup>wards.

#### Darsāpūrṇamāsa :

The Darsāpūrṇamāsa sacrifices are the pattern or the model of all sacrifices which are said to belong to the

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51. Prof. Weber thinks that the Agnihotra or specially its morning rite is a sun-spell to aid the sun to perform its daily function of rising. Cf. Indische Studien, X. 329. His supposition is certainly based on the opinion of those who insist on offering the oblation before the sun rises on the ground that 'assuredly it (sun) would not rise, were he not to make that offering.' (S. Br. II. 3, 1, 5).

52. S. Br. II. 3, 3, 10: yathā vā iṣoranīkam / evam yaज्ञā-nāmagnihotram . . . . . /

53. S. Br. II. 3, 3, 15: naurha vā eṣā svargyā / yadagnihotram . . . . . /

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istī-type and in which the sacrificer employs four priests (viz. Hotṛ, Adhvaryu, Āgnīdhra and Brahmā). The Śātapatha Brāhmaṇa has highly eulogised these sacrifices and has first dealt with them at length, though from the stand-point of the sequence of time Agnyādhāna (establishment of sacrificial Fires) should come first. Indeed these sacrifices have gained the same importance as the Soma-sacrifice, <sup>54</sup> ~~the Soma-sacrifice~~.

The Darsāpūrṇamāsa includes two performances — one on the darsā (i.e. the dark moon day) and the other on the pūrṇamāsa (i.e. the full-moon day). One who has performed the Āgnyādhya ceremony (i.e. the ceremony of establishing the sacred fires) is entitled to begin the performance of Darsāpūrṇamāsa on the next full-moon day. The sacrifice actually consists of two days in the full-moon and two days in the dark moon. Commencing the rite in the morning of the full moon day, the sacrificer has to enter on dīksā which is an act of purification. "He who is consecrated approaches the gods and becomes one of the gods" (devān vā eṣa upāvartate yo dīksate sa devatānāmeko bhavati — III. 1, 1, 8) says the Śātapatha Brāhmaṇa. Though there are many ancillary rites in both the darsā and pūrṇamāsa performances, there are three principal oblations in each of them. In the full moon performance two oblations consisting of rice-pap (puṛṇā-dāśā) are offered to Agni, and Agni and Soma jointly (agnī-śomou). Another oblation consisting of butter and characterised as upāṁśu-yāga (i.e. performed in a low tone) is offered

to one of the four deities viz. Viṣṇu, Prajāpati, Agni and Soma. In the new or dark-moon performance one oblation of rice-pap is offered to Agni, another of milk goes to Indra; a third one, consisting of a mixture of sweet and sour milk called Sāmnāyya is also offered to Indra. In reference to the third offering some authorities want to restrict the same only to that person who has already, performed the Soma-sacrifice. The Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa, however, allows one to offer the Sāmnāyya even if he has not performed the Soma-sacrifice.  
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The process of performance on the ḍarsā and on the pūrṇamāsa is more or less the same. It includes many details. The ceremonies performed on the first day are mainly preparatory. These consist of the preparation of the fires, the formal taking of a vow by the sacrificer, which involves his abstention from certain kinds of food, specially meat, and from all sensual pleasures, sleeping on the ground, the cutting of hair and beard, observance of silence and so on. The ceremonies of the second day include fetching of the sacred water and the utensils necessary for the performance, preparation of the rice-pap, preparation of the altar, girding of the sacrificer's wife with a cord, her looking down upon the sacrificial butter, covering of the altar with the grass and laying three enclosing sticks around the fire. All these preliminary details are performed along with the utterance of proper mantras. These preliminaries having been completed



the real sacrifice begins. First of all, kindling woods are laid on fire in accompaniment with the utterance of fifteen Sāmidhenī verses. After that two libations of butter are made and then comes the Pravara (i.e. the enumeration of the sacrificer's ancestral line) followed by the formal choosing of the Hotṛ. The principal offering takes place after the five fore-offerings (prayājah) of butter to the kindling sticks.<sup>56</sup> The principal offerings are made along with the utterance of anuvākya (invitatory prayer), yājya (offering prayer) and the vasat-call; these are made complete with an additional offering to Agni Sviṣṭakṛt in which all gods are invoked. Then follows the Idābhaksana or the tasting of the remains of oblations by the priests of whom Brahmā as the superintending priest has a special share. The other subsequent rites are the anuyājas (i.e. after-offerings made to Barhi, Narāśamsa and Agni Sviṣṭakṛt), the Sāmyuvāka (an invocation of prosperity) and the four Patnīsamāyājas in which the wives of the gods are also the recipients of the offering. After the performance of some other minor rites the sacrificer, who is now spiritually united with Viṣṇu, imitates the latter in striding three steps on the sacrificial ground, and the sacrifice comes to an end.

The Darsāpūrṇamāsa sacrifices are to be performed all life long or for thirty years. In the Dākṣāyana sacrifice which is but a peculiar modification of the new and

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56. Samit, Tanūnapāt, It̐, Barhi and Svāhākāra — these are the names of the sticks to whom the five fore-offerings are made.

full-moon sacrifices, the performance may continue for fifteen years only (XI. 1, 2, 13).

<sup>57</sup>  
Cāturmāsyas :

The Cāturmāsyas categorically share the characteristics of an iṣṭi and according to the G.B. (I. 6, 7) they constitute one of the seven Haviryajñas. But since these rituals are very complicated in nature, they have been dealt with separately in the Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa. These sacrifices are performed in four successive parts called the parvan, viz. the Vaisṛadeva, the Varuṇapraghāsa, the Sākamedha and the Sunāsīrya.

The Vaisṛadeva parva has more or less the same procedure as an iṣṭi. In it, oblations consisting of sacrificial cakes, rice-pap and payasyā are offered to different gods like Agni, Soma, Savitr, Sarasvatī, Maruts or Maruts Svataṇats, Viśvedevas and Dyāvāprthivya. This ceremony has been declared to be greater than an ordinary haviryajña, since it has nine fore-offerings, nine after-offerings and <sup>58</sup> three Samiṣṭayaṇas.

The Varuṇapraghāsa has the first five offerings in common with the Vaisṛadeva. In addition to those five there are also oblations offered to Indra and Agni, Varuṇa, Maruts

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57. The Cāturmāsyas are performed every fourth month round the year, and hence the name Cāturmāsyas.

58. S. Br. II. 5, 1, 21.

and Ka (Prajāpati). This sacrifice has some special features. The most interesting of them is that before offering oblations, the sacrificer's wife is enquired about her sexual purification and she has to confess whether she has any illicit connection with anybody.<sup>59</sup> In this parvan again there is an avabhr̥tha bath at the end of the performance just as there occurs one at the end of a soma-sacrifice.

The third parvan viz. the Sākamedha consists of several offerings and requires two days for its performance. On the first day oblations are made to Agni Anīkavat, Maruts Sāntapanas and Maruts Gr̥hamedhins. Next day in the morning is performed the Darvihoma to Indra, an oblation of cake is offered to Maruts Kr̥idins and pap to Aditi. Then follows the Mahāhavis which includes, besides the usual five offerings, the oblations to Indra-Agni, Mahendra and Visvakarman. In the afternoon is performed the Mahāpitryajña or sacrifice to the Manes and this is succeeded by the Traiyaṃbaka-homa or offering to Rudra Tryambaka.

The fourth parvan of the Cāturmāsya called the Sunāsīrya consists of an oblation to Vāyu and another to Sūrya. The author of the Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa, however, thinks that one, performing the Cāturmāsya, may offer the Sunāsīrya<sup>60</sup> at the same time when he performs the Sākamedha offerings.

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59. Such confession is sure to get her rid of the fault and to make the performance pure and perfect. Cf. niruktaṃ vā enaḥ kanīyo bhavati satyaṃ bhavati / S.Br. II. 5, 2, 20

60. S. Br. II. 6, 3, 10.

x x x x In other words by offering the Seasonal offerings (i.e. the Cāturmāsya) three times in the year, he indeed gains the whole year.

The performance of the Cāturmāsya has been praised in high terms in the Śātapatha Brāhmaṇa: "Verily imperishable<sup>61</sup> is the righteousness of him who offers the Cāturmāsya".

The significance of this eulogy is that one who performs the Cāturmāsya all round the year, gains the year. The year is the whole as it symbolises the time eternal and the whole is imperishable. The origin of these rites has been referred to the gods in the Brāhmaṇa (V. 2, 3, 10). Modern scholars generally agree that the Cāturmāsya have been originally popular rites with magical ends.<sup>62</sup> In the Brāhmaṇas, however, they are elevated to the high rank of the Śrauta-ritual and sometimes have been connected with the Soma-sacrifice.<sup>63</sup>

#### Pasūyāga (Animal Sacrifice) :

The Paśubandha or the animal-sacrifice is an

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61. S. Br. II. 6, 3, 1 : akṣayyaṁ ha vai śukṛtaṁ cāturmāsya-yājino bhavati /

62. Most scholars think that the Cāturmāsya are popular rites of fertilization. Cf. J.C. Heesterman, Ancient Indian Consecration, p. 28f. Prof. Keith has taken the fourth performance i.e. the Sunāsīrya parvan as an agricultural rite. RPVU, Vol. II, p. 323.

63. The avabhṛtha-bath at the end of the Varuṇa-praghāsa or the inclusion of the Cāturmāsya in the Rājasūya sacrifice evidently is a pointer to its Saumika-character.

independent sacrifice and can also be performed as a constituent part of the Soma-sacrifice.<sup>64</sup> The Śātapatha Brāhmaṇa mentions two types of animal sacrifice — one is of the Haviryajña order and the other of that of the Soma-sacrifice. Of<sup>them</sup> the Haviryajña-order is that at which the Adhvaryu brings the sacrificer the fast food, leads water forward and pours out a jarful of water at which the sacrificer takes the Viṣṇu-strides. The animal-sacrifice belonging to the order of the Soma-sacrifice is that at which these rites are not performed.<sup>65</sup> The independent animal-sacrifice termed as Nirūḍha-paśu-bandha is regarded as model for all Paśu-yagas and is really a modification of an animal sacrifice in Soma-yāga called the agnīsomīya paśu. The Śātapatha Brāhmaṇa, however, gives details of the animal-sacrifice as a part of the Soma-ritual and not as a distinct performance.<sup>66</sup>

In a Soma-yāga the performance of the animal-sacrifice takes place on the *fourth day*. The deities are Agni and Soma. Six priests viz. Adhvaryu, Prati-prasthātr, Hotr, Āgnīdhra, Maitrāvaruṇa and Brahman are necessary in this performance. Of them Maitrāvaruṇa is not only an assistant of Hotr; he shares the function of the Hotr

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64. There seems to exist some controversy regarding the real nature and status of the Animal-sacrifice. The Ś. Br. quotes the question asked by the Brahmvādins which was already current at that time as to whether the Animal-sacrifice is an iṣṭi or a great (mahā i.e. Soma-) sacrifice. (XI. 7, 2, 2).

65. Ś. Br. XI. 7, 2, 1.

66. Ś. Br. XI. 7, 2, 2

by uttering the praiṣa mantras and by reciting the anuvākyās. In this sacrifice a sacrificial post or stake (yūpa) is needed for binding the animal and it is made of khadira trees. It is posted towards the easternmost part of the sacrificial altar and when it is erected, the Adhvaryu drives up the animal and ties it there. The Hotṛ recites the eleven āpri-verses and also the eleven fore-offerings. Then while the Hotṛ recites verses to Agni circumambient, the Āgnīdhra priest leads the animal to the slaughtering ground. While the animal is being led, the Pratiprasthāṭṛ holds on to it from behind, the Adhvaryu holds on to the Prati-prasthāṭṛ and the sacrificer to the Adhvaryu. Then the animal is immolated and its limbs are dissected by the person called Śamitṛ. The omentum (vapā) of the animal is pulled out. It is heated on the cooking fire and is offered in five layers, the melted butter, then a piece of gold, then the omentum, then again a piece of gold and then the melted butter again. (III. 8, 2, 17ff.) After the Vapā-offering the Hotṛ recites verses, while the offering to the Manotā deity is made. Then offerings are made with segregated parts of the body of the animal to Agni and Soma, to the Lord of Forest (Vanaspati), Agni Sviṣṭakṛt and the Quarters (diśah). After that, are performed the after-offerings and the Patnīśaṁyājas. In the animal sacrifices as in the Soma-sacrifice, the avabhyṭha is done but it is performed symbolically with the heart spit.<sup>67</sup>

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67. S. Br. III. 8, 5, 8ff.

Soma-sacrifice : Agniṣṭoma

The sacrifice in which the juice of the soma-creeper constitutes the main oblation, is known as the Soma-yāga. It is a very old ritual; the parallel existence of this cult in the Iranian Zend-avesta and the similarity of the Vedic cult with its Iranian counterpart, undoubtedly shows the prevalence of soma-sacrifice before the Indian Aryans became separated from their brethren, the Iranians. At the time of the Brāhmanas, it attains so much elaborateness that it requires sixteen priests for its performance.<sup>68</sup> Its variety is also remarkable. It is said to have seven forms called the Saṁsthās, viz. Agniṣṭoma, Atyagniṣṭoma, Ukthya, Śoḍaśin, Vājapeya, Atirātra and Aptoryāma.<sup>69</sup> The Soma-sacrifices may also be classed as those that are finished in one day (ekāha), those that are performed for more than one day upto twelve days (ahīna) and those that extend over more than twelve days upto one year or more (satra). Generally the Agniṣṭoma, also known as Jyotiṣṭoma, is regarded as the model (prakṛti) of all Soma-sacrifices.

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68. Some ritual texts mention another priest called Sadasya as the seventeenth one, but the Śat. Br. strictly refutes to accept him. Cf. Ś. Br. X. 4. 1. 19.

69. Cf. Gautama Śrauta Sūtra, VIII. 21; Lāṭyāyana Śrauta Sūtra, V. 4, 24. Earlier the G.B. (I. 5, 23) has mentioned these seven and has called them sūtyās — agniṣṭoma'tyagniṣṭoma ukthyaḥ ṣoḍaśi-mān'stataḥ / vājapeyo'-tirātraś cāptor-yāmātra saptamaḥ // ityete sūtyāḥ /

The ceremony begins with the initiation (<sup>70</sup>dīkṣā) of the sacrifices. For this an iṣṭi, called the Dīkṣanīyeṣṭi, is performed in which an offering is made to Agni and Soma. On the second day takes place the Prāyanīyeṣṭi which marks the beginning of the Soma-yāga and in which five deities viz. Pathyā Svasti, Agni, Soma, Savitr and Aditi are invoked. Then follows the ceremony of purchasing soma.<sup>71</sup> After the Soma is bought and is placed on a cart, the sacrificial rite, called the Ātithyeṣṭi, is performed in honour of ~~the~~ Soma. For it is thought that Soma is the king of gods and Brāhmaṇas and he has come to the sacrificer's house as an honoured guest. This is followed by the function Tānūnaptra in which all the priests and the sacrificer touch together the ājya (the clarified butter) kept in a vessel. This ceremony is thought to establish an indissoluble bond between the sacrificer and the priest.<sup>72</sup> Next comes the Pravargya (or the

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70. Dīkṣā includes observance of various rules (vratas) and is thought to make him fit for performing the sacrifice. The S. Br. thinks that it confers divinity on the sacrificer. cf. S. Br. III. 1, 1, 8; III. 1, 1, 10.

71. Though actually soma has already been procured and carefully preserved, yet a mock scene is to be enacted before all, showing the purchase of Soma from a Sūdra in exchange of ten mediums of barter, viz. one-year-old cow, gold, she-goat, milch cow and her calf, an ox, a bull-calf, a she-calf and clothes. Scholars think that the whole thing is to symbolize "the acquisition of the Soma by the gods from the Gandharvas."

72. J.C. Heesterman, Ancient Indian Consecration, p. 191.



milk-boiling) ceremony followed by the Upasāḍ-yāgas (consisting of three offerings of ghee to Agni, Soma and Viṣṇu) on the three consecutive days. During the performance of these rites the preparation of the special altars for the Soma-ritual takes place and the Āhavanīya fire is transferred to the high altar. At the end of the Pravargya and other rituals a paśu-yagajis performed with the offering of the paśu to the deity, Agniṣomou (Agni and Soma jointly). After all these preliminary rites being performed, the actual Soma-yāga begins. Early in the morning the Hotṛ performs the prātaranuvāka in which only verses are uttered for invoking the gods. Then begins the soma-pressing with two stones, the juice is extracted and put in a vessel called graha. The pressing of soma and extracting juice from it is known as savana. At the time of soma-pressing ṛk-verses are chanted by the priests belonging to the Hotṛ-group and sāmans are sung by the Udgāṭṛ priest and his assistants. Soma is pressed thrice (in the morning, at mid-day and in the evening) according as libations are made with the soma-juice at three different times of the day. After the libations are over, the remaining soma-juice is partaken of by the priests along with the sacrificer. The mid-day libation being over, sacrificial fees in the form of sacrificial gifts are offered to the priests.<sup>73</sup> After the third and last oblation of soma is

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73. Four kinds of sacrificial gifts have been mentioned in Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa (IV. 3, 4, 24-27), viz. Gold, Cow Cloth and Horse.

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 offered, the Avabhr̥tha-rite takes place. This ritual is performed in water where approach the priests along with the sacrificer and his wife. The two deities Varuna and Agni are invoked, and the offering of the oblations to them, is made in the water instead of in the fire. The sacrificial utensils and other things are immersed in water and the sacrificer and his wife bathe in the water. Having put on new clothes, when they return to the sacrificial ground, the concluding rite called the Udayanīyeṣṭi is performed. This marks the closing of a soma-ritual just as Prāyanīyeṣṭi marks the beginning.

This, in fact, is a skeleton description of the Agniṣṭoma which stands as the model for all other Soma-rituals. The other forms of the Soma-sacrifices (saṁsthās) are based on the Agniṣṭoma, with particular changes special to them. In this context, we like to mention two other varieties of the Soma-sacrifice — the Gavāmayana (model for all Satra-type of rituals) and the Dvādaśāha (model for all sacrifices which partake of the nature of both ahīna and satra). The Gavāmayana is the great sacrificial session usually extending over 361 days — nearly a whole year round. It may be arranged in three parts — first part consisting of 180 days and having different forms of Soma-performance; the last part also consists of 180 days during which period

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74. The avabhr̥tha is the final bath taken by the sacrificer and his wife, along with some rites. It is characteristic of a soma-sacrifice and marks the end of the ritual.

the rites of the first 180 days are performed in the reverse order. The middle part consists of one-day performance called visuva or visuvant (equinox). The Dvādasāha combines in itself some details of the Sūtra-type and some of the Ahina-type of sacrifice and requires thirty six days for its completion. Like a satra, it always ~~xx~~ begins and ends with an atirātra, but the usage of the root 'yaj' and certain other injunctions indicate its character as an Ahina.

Sacrifices having a political import :

Besides the usual varieties the Śat. Brāhmaṇa has dealt with some rites which evidently have a political significance, such as the Rājasūya, Vājapeya, Āśvamedha and Puruṣamedha. They are connected with the attainment of kingship and paramount sovereignty on the part of the king and consequently they have a royal performer.

Rājasūya : According to the Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa, the Rājasūya is the normal ceremony of coronation — "rājñā eva rājasūyam / rājā vai rājasūyeneṣṭvā bhavati" (To the king doubtless belongs the Rājasūya, for by offering the Rājasūya he becomes king).<sup>75</sup> Thus while in most other Vedic texts the Rājasūya is highly eulogised as the performance by virtue of which all the kings subdued the earth, the Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa has lowered its importance by making it an ordinary

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75. Ś.Br. V.1.1.12.

coronation-ceremony — a state ceremonial to which any petty ruler might fairly think himself entitled.<sup>76</sup>

The Rājasūya or the royal inauguration-ceremony comprises of three parts — first, a series of preliminary sacrifices, second, the Abhiṣecanīya or the sprinkling or the anointing and third, a number of post-anointing ceremonies. The ceremony generally begins on the first day of the bright half of the month of Phālguna. A purificatory ceremony called the Pavitra takes place at first and the four seasonal offerings (Cāturmāsya) follow for the next one year. After the completion of the Cāturmāsya some more iṣṭis and homas are performed among which eleven offerings called the 'Ratnīnām Havīṃsi' take place. The eleven Ratnins are: (i) the Commander of the army, (ii) the Purohita, (iii) the Kṣatr (the ruling power i.e. the king), (iv) the Queen, (v) the Sūta (court-ministrel), (vi) the Grāmaṇī (the headman), (vii) the Chamberlain (Kṣattri), (viii) the Charioteer (Saṃgrahītr), (ix) the Carver (Bhāga-dugha), (x) the Keeper of the dice (Aksāvāpa) and the Huntsman (Govikartana), (xi) Pālāgala (courier) (V. 3. 1, 1-12). The sacrificer also goes to the house of the Parivṛtti (the discarded wife) and offers a rice pap to the goddess Nirṛti; this offering is not however, included as one of the 'Ratnīnām Havīṃsi'.

The king goes to the houses of these persons excepting Kṣatra and Aksāvāpa and Govikartana together, for whom

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76. Julius Eggeling, SBE, XLIV, p.XV.

offerings are made at the royal palace. The offerings are made to Agni, Brhaspati, Indra, Aditi, Varuna, Maruts, Savitr, Asvins, Pusan, Rudra, and the Way (personified). These offerings are significant since they suggest the intention of the kingly sacrificer to make all the officers and others faithful followers.<sup>77</sup>

The second part of the Rājasūya is the main consecration ceremony as it mainly consists in sprinkling the king with holy waters. It is a five-day performance and begins with offerings to eight gods, who are called 'Devasus' (Divine Quickeners) in the Brāhmaṇa as they have the power of quickening' (V. 3, 3, 13). Each of these gods is addressed before offering with an epithet of his own.<sup>78</sup>

77. The offerings made by the consecrated king at the houses of the 'Ratnins' is significant in another way. These Ratnins actually represent different classes of people in the society and the king's intention to seek their allegiance surely has some political bearing. In the list of the Ratnins one can discern the four social classes. Besides the Brāhmaṇa (the Purohita) and the Kṣatriya (the king himself) we find also representatives of the Vaiśyas (grāmaṇī) and even the Sūdras (probably the akṣāvāpa and the govikartana; Sāyaṇa, however, thinks that it stands for the commander of the army and others' namely the Sūdras — cf. sūdrān senānyādīn.) The Śr. Br. itself testifies to the participation of the Sūdras in these offerings by mentioning the subsequent Soma-Rudra iṣṭi as a purificatory rite necessitated by the inclusion of 'those unworthy of sacrifice' (yadāya jñiyan yajñena prasajati - V. 3, 2, 2) into the sacrificial performance.

78. The names and epithets or functions of these eight divinities are worthy of attention; they are — Savitr, of

These epithets signify the ideals of royal duties and functions which the king-designate is expected to follow. After the completion of the offerings, some mantras are uttered in which the king is announced as the king of all people excepting the Brāhmaṇas of whom Soma is declared the king. After that the sprinkling begins. For this seventeen kinds of liquid are collected and mixed together in a vessel made of the wood of the udumbara tree. Each of these kinds of liquid symbolises a special virtue which is expected to exist in a king. The sprinkling is done by a Brāhmaṇa, a Kṣatriya and a Vaiśya — the three representatives of the upper three classes. After the anointing is over, the king puts on new garments, such as an under-garment called Tārpya, a garment made of undyed wool, a mantle and a head-band. Finally, the Adhvaryu endows him with strength by handing over a stringed bow and three arrows. A throne, made of Khadira wood, is placed on a tiger-skin to serve as a seat for the king and another piece of the same skin is spread over it as a symbol of vigour. When the anointment becomes over, the king takes three steps on the tiger-skin representing Viṣṇu's three steps for the symbolic ascension of the three worlds — earth, heaven and the upper regions.

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(contd. from pre-page)

true impulse (satya prasava), Agni, the lord of the house (gr̥hapati), Soma, the lord of the forest (vanaspati), Br̥haspati Vāk (the lord of speech), Indra, the superior one (jyestha), Rudra the lord of cattle (paśupati), Mitra the true (satya) and Varuṇa, the lord of dharma (dharmapati). cf. V. 3, 3, 2-9.

The Rājasūya, the time-old ceremony of royal inauguration, seems to have some popular rites accompanied with it. Among these noteworthy is the performance of a mimic cow-raid (V. 4, 3, 1ff.). In this ritual the king mounts a chariot yoked with four horses, drives the car to a place among the hundred cows of his relative, and touches a cow with the end of the bow and this symbolises the acquisition of the ownership of the cattle to the king. A game of dice is also a compulsory part of the consecration ceremony in which the winning throw assuredly symbolises his conquest over all castes and all regions. Of similarly popular nature is the striking of the king with sticks by the Adhvaryu and his assistants in order to expel the king's sins (V. 4, 4, 7) or the passing of a wooden sword by the Adhvaryu or the royal Purohita, thereby rendering him weaker than the Brāhmaṇas, but stronger than his enemies (V. 4, 4, 15). All these rites connected with the actual sprinkling of holy waters on the king-elect simply signify the unrivalled greatness which every king should possess.

The third part of the Rājasūya sacrifice includes the performance of the Daśapeya which is actually a modification of the Agniṣṭoma. It is to be performed on the tenth day after the unction festival (V. 4, 5, 3) and during this ceremony hundred persons including the king, drink in groups of ten, out of ten cups (Hence is the name Daśapeya). The ceremony has a genealogical interest because while drinking each has to cite ten generations of his soma-drinking

ancestors. After one year is held the Keśavapanīya or the cutting of the hair on the king's head. During this one year, which is a year of vow for the king, the consecrated king is expected not to shave and thereby to preserve the vigour which is thought to have been sprinkled on his head in the form of the holy waters (V. 5, 3, 1). Next follows the Sautrāmanī performance as an expiation for excesses in the drinking of soma-juice and then the closing oblation Traidhātavī marks its end.

Vājapeya : The Vājapeya (literally, 'the drink of strength or food')<sup>79</sup> is generally regarded as one of the seven forms (Samsthās) of Soma-ritual, but it has the nature of an independent Soma-rite. Julius Eggeling<sup>80</sup> along with Prof. Hillebrandt,<sup>81</sup> is of the opinion that the Vājapeya originated as a time-old popular festival to celebrate something like the Olympic games. Prof. Keith<sup>82</sup> also holds the same opinion that "it preserves despite the formalism imposed

79. Though the word Vājapeya is interpreted differently by different scholars, the S. Br. is prone to accept the meaning of the word 'vāja' as 'food' (annaṃ vai vājāḥ - S. Br. VI. 3, 2, 10; IX. 3, 4, 1), 'peya' from the  $\sqrt{\text{pā}}$  (to drink) may mean 'drink'. In S. Br. (V.1,3,3; V. 1, 4, 12) a dvandva compound is suggested for the word Vājapeya and the meaning is obviously 'food and drink' (cf. annapeyaṃ ha vai nāmaitaḥ yad vājapeyam; annaṃ vā eṣa ujjayati yo vājapeyena yajate.)

80. Introduction to the translation of the Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa, SBE, Vol. XLI, p. XXIV.

81. Vedische Mythologie, p. 247.

82. Encyclopaedia of Religion and Ethics, Vol. I, p. 339.



upon it by its inclusion in the soma-ritual, many traces of very popular origin." Thus it is later only that this ceremonial partakes of both religious and political nature.

Regarding the purpose of the performance of the Vājapeya and the other coronation-ceremony, the Rājasūya, there is some controversy. We find that the Śātapatha Brāhmaṇa differs from other authorities by giving it a superior position to the Rājasūya. While others agree in making Vājapeya a preliminary ceremony to be performed both by a Brāhmaṇa-priest and by a king and to be followed in due time by Brhaspatisava (for a priest) and the Rājasūya (for a king), the Śātapatha Brāhmaṇa prescribes the Vājapeya only for a king and definitely forbids the Rājasūya to follow. According to it — "one becomes rājā or king by performing the Rājasūya sacrifice; by performing the Vājapeya sacrifice one becomes a samrāt. Rājya is of lower order sāmrajya is of a superior order. A king longs to be an emperor, <sup>the emperor</sup> never desires to become a king." (V. 1, 1, 13). Therefore "one should not perform the Rājasūya after performing the Vājapeya; that would be a degradation or descent just as if one who was an emperor were to become a king". The Śātapatha Brāhmaṇa further takes Brhaspatisava as identified with the Vājapeya (brhaspatisavo vā esa yad vājapeyam — V. 2, 1, 19).

The performance of the Vājapeya includes generally one pressing day and at least thirteen days of consecration

and at least thirteen days of consecration and three Upasad days so that it takes up at least seventeen days and may be spun out to a year. It also includes animal-sacrifice. But the most interesting of all features performed in the Vājapeya are the āji-dhāvana or the chariot-race, the roha or mounting a post and the recurrence of the number seventeen. The chariot-race takes place at the midday pressing of the final day. The sacrificer competes with sixteen rivals and seventeen drums put in a row from Āgnīdhra hearth westwards are beaten for making an auspicious sound. The four horses which are harnessed to the sacrificer's chariot are sprinkled with holy water and a rice-pap is prepared for Brhaspati, the winner of the first race of this kind. A post is fixed as the farthest limit of the race-course at the end of the measurement of seventeen arrows. During the race the Adhvaryu utters mantras addressed to the horses of the sacrificer's chariot. The cars run up to the post round which they turn and come back in such a way that the sacrificer happens to be the first to reach the altar.<sup>83</sup> After certain other libations the wife of the sacrificer is brought

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83. "This race, like the cow-raïd and a dice-play in other inauguration ceremonies, represents a test for recognizing the ruler's superiority in valour and physical prowess and a means of enabling him to prove himself the fittest man for kingship as well as magical devices to achieve the defeat of his adversaries in prowess, sagacity etc."  
— J. Gonda, *Ancient Indian Kingship*, p. 85.

in. A ladder is placed against the sacrificial post and the sacrificer after calling his wife mounts until his head overtops the post. The performance ends with seventeen ujjitis or benedictions accompanied by libations.

Asvamedha : The Asvamedha, actually a soma-sacrifice, is also a ritual with a political-end-in-view since it aims at the attainment of paramount sovereignty on the part of the king. Probably, it was originally a victory-celebration-rite<sup>84</sup> and later it was elevated in the Brāhmaṇa-texts as a Śrauta-ritual. The Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa has connected the origin of the Asvamedha sacrifice with Prajāpati (XIII. 1, 4, 1); elsewhere it has been said that Prajāpati gave all the sacrifices to the gods but reserved the Asvamedha for himself (XIII. 2, 1, 1). The Asvamedha has even been identified with Prajāpati in the Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa (prajāpatir/asvamedhaḥ - XIII. 2, 2, 13; 4, 1, 15). This ritual is also praised therein such high terms as "the bull of all the sacrifices" (ṛṣabha eṣa yajñānāṃ yad/asvamedhaḥ - XIII. 1, 2, 2) or "the king of all the sacrifices" (rājā vā eṣa yajñānāṃ yad/asvamedhaḥ - XIII. 2, 2, 1). It is often identified with all (XIII. 3, 2, 4; 3, 3, 6), because it serves to obtain everything.

At the time of the Brāhmaṇas the Asvamedha is essentially a sacrifice to be performed by an aspiring ruler. The Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa (XIII. 4, 1, 2) calls it a ksatriya-yajña. It should be performed by a powerful king and if any

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84. Cf. A.B. Keith, RPWU, VOL. II, P. 344.

weak ruler performs this sacrifice he becomes defeated.<sup>85</sup>  
 Before the actual performance of the Aśvamedha the sacrificial horse is let loose to wander for a year all over the country and armed men go with it for protection (XII. 1, 6, 3). While the horse is roaming the sacrificer offers certain homas and hears his own pious and heroic deeds sung before him (XIII. 1, 5, 1). He listens to the Hotā reciting the Pāriplava legend (XIII. 4, 3, 11) and there is also a theological discussion (Brahmodya - XIII. 2, 6, 9ff.). In this performance all the queens of the monarch with their full retinue have to take active part. Among their various activities there is a very queer rite viz. an intercourse between the dead horse and the chief queen (Mahiṣī). The Mahiṣī has to lie down near the dead horse, cover up with the upper cloth and having stretched out the genital organ of the horse put it in the womb. The intercourse is possibly of popular origin and is believed to be a means of fertilization. The Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa also records an apparently obscure dialogue between the priests and the other wives of the sacrificer at the time of the intercourse (XIII. 2, 9, 1ff.). The Brāhmaṇa-text, however, explains the dialogue in a symbolic manner, but probably it is cognizant of the obscenity of the dialogue and hence, a verse containing the word 'surabhi',<sup>86</sup> has been prescribed to be uttered next as an expiation. The

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85. S. Br. XIII. 1, 6, 3: tasmād rāṣṭryaśvamedhena yajeta  
 parā vā eṣa śicyate yo'balo'svamedhena yajate . . . .

86. S. Br. XIII. 2, 9, 9; 5, 2, 9.

Asvamedha also contains another peculiar offering viz. the Jumbaka-offering at the time of the avabhr̥tha (or the final bathing at the end). This offering is made on the head of "the white-spotted, bald-headed (man) with protruding teeth and reddish brown eyes"<sup>87</sup> which is again thought to be the form of Varuṇa. By this offering the sacrificer is thought to redeem himself from Varuṇa (i.e. Varuṇa's noose).

Puruṣamedha : The Puruṣamedha or the Human sacrifice is an interesting ritual described only in the Brāhmanas of the Yajurveda and in some other ritualistic Sūtra-texts. It is a soma-ritual by nature and there are twenty-three dīkṣās, twelve upasads and five sutyās (soma-pressing days) in the Puruṣamedha (XIII. 6, 1, 2). But the particular feature which gives it a novelty is the offering of puruṣas or men in this sacrifice. The origin of the Puruṣamedha in the Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa has been attributed to Puruṣa Nārāyaṇa Himself who overpassed all beings by performing this rite.<sup>88</sup> The brāhmanical performance may also be taken as connected with the attainment of overpowering strength.

The performance of the sacrifice consists of different rituals as in a soma-sacrifice. On the central day the puruṣas (men) are seized (XIII. 6, 2, 2) but it does not enumerate the details of the puruṣas and the deities to whom the puruṣas are to be offered. The men are bound to the

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87. S'. Br. XIII. 3, 6, 5.

88. S'. Br. XIII. 6, 1, 1ff.

sacrificial posts (XIII. 6, 2, 12) but they are not actually immolated. After the paryagnikarāṇa performance (i.e. after the fire has been carried round them) all of them are set free (XIII. 6, 2, 13). Instead eleven barren cows are offered to Mitrā-Varuṇa, the Viśve-devaḥ and Brhaspati (XIII. 6, 2, 16). The dakṣiṇās are also novel in this sacrifice. The Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa (XIII. 6, 2, 18) states that "what there is towards the middle of the kingdom, other than the land and property of the Brāhmaṇas, but including the men, of that the eastern quarter belongs to the Hotṛ, the southern to the Brahman, the western to the Adhvaryu, the northern to the Udgātṛ and the Hotṛakas share this along with them."<sup>89</sup> This is in the case of a Kṣatriya Yajamāna but if the performer of the Puruṣamedha is a Brāhmaṇa, then he should bestow all his property as dakṣiṇā.<sup>90</sup>

Though the term Puruṣamedha connotes a sacrifice in which human beings are to be offered, there is much doubt whether this practice was actually in vogue in ancient India. Even if we suppose that the inclusion of such a sacrifice in the sacrificial system proves the traces of an ancient custom, we may also add that the performance of the Puruṣamedha is no actual practice at least in the age of the Brāhmaṇas. No other Brāhmaṇa except the Yajurveda Brāhmaṇas

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89. S. Br. XIII. 6, 2, 18 : athāto dakṣiṇāmāṃmadhyaṃ prati rāṣṭrasya yadanyad bhūmes' ca brāhmaṇasya ca vittaṃ sapuruṣaṃ prācī dig ghoturdakṣiṇā brahmaṇaḥ pratiṣyadhvar-yorudīcyudgātus tadeva hotṛkā anvābhaktāḥ //

90. S. Br. XIII. 6, 2, 19.

describes it and in the Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa it is a symbolical performance, the victims being set free after the fire has been carried round them.<sup>91</sup> There is also clear statement in the Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa that the actual slaughtering of the puruṣas should be avoided : "If human beings are actually offered in that case man would eat man's flesh".<sup>92</sup> Thus the Brāhmaṇa-texts, particularly the Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa, show a tendency of changed mentality which does not approve human slaughtering.

Sautrāmanī : Sautrāmanī is dealt with in the Śat. Brāhmaṇa as an expiatory rite. Along with paśu and puroḍāśa, surā (spirituous liquor) also forms an element (article) of offering here (XII. 8, 1, 2). The use of surā is surely a feature which perhaps reveals to us the original popular character of the Sautrāmanī. There is an important legend in the Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa (XII. 9, 3, 7ff.) which relates that the Sautrāmanī in the beginning belonged to the asuras (asuresu vā eso'gre yajña āsīt sautrāmanī). The gods later, with the help of the Circumambient Fire, obtained Sautrāmanī from the asuras. This legend may be taken as testifying to the popular origin of the Sautrāmanī.<sup>93</sup> It was only later

91. In the Ait. Brāhmaṇa we do not get any prescription of human sacrifice, but it gives the anecdote of Śunah-sēpa which also shows that the human victim was released after some purificatory rites.

92. XIII. 6, 2, 13.

93. At S. Br. (V. 5, 4, 14), however, it has been said that the offering, namely the Sautrāmanī, is created by the gods. It is also said to be 'aindra' i.e. belonging to Indra (XII. 8, 2, 24).

elevated and brāhmanised by including it in the list of Śrauta-rituals. Even at the time of the Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa there seems to exist some controversy as to whether this sacrifice is to be performed or not (XII. 8, 1, 17). The objection against its performance has, however, been finally removed. In order to establish its importance, on the other hand, the Brāhmaṇa has highly praised its performance. A form of it called the 'caraka' has been included in the Rājasūya sacrifice. The other form which is called 'kankila' is performed separately.

Though the Sautrāmanī is praised as bestowing prosperity, cattle and food (XII. 9, 1, 17; 8, 3, 17) its principal significance in the Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa seems to be 'curing'. There in a legend it has been said that Indra once drank soma uninvited but that Soma-juice hurt him and flowed away in all directions from his vital airs, except from his mouth. Aśvins cured him by means of this offering. As he was well-saved (sutrāta), the performance got the name Sautrāmanī (sutrātaṁ batainam atrāsātām<sup>ati</sup> tasmāt sautrāmanī nāma / V. 5, 4, 12~~11~~).).



Agnicayana :

The Agnicayana or the fire-building ceremony is an optional ancillary rite of a Soma-sacrifice. But the Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa has dealt with it with somewhat unusual importance in the Kāṇḍas VI to X.<sup>94</sup> The reason behind such importance is the mystic nature attributed to this rite in the Brāhmaṇa. Prof. Eggeling<sup>95</sup> thinks that it was originally an independent rite and later on came to be included in the system of the Soma-sacrifices. Though the term Agnicayana merely denotes the ceremony of building of the fire-altar, it has certain important cosmogonic ideas underlying the ritualistic performance. In other words, ritualism here merges itself into the highest philosophy of spiritualism.

In the beginning of the Agnicayana, which is to be performed in the Somayāga called Mahāvrata, an animal-sacrifice is performed in which a man, a horse, a bull, a ram and a he-goat are offered.<sup>96</sup> On the eighth day, a horse, an ass and a he-goat are taken in procession to the south of

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94. It has already been stated in Chapter II that in these kāṇḍas the sage Sāṇḍilya has been referred to as the chief authority, while in the remaining portions of the Brāhmaṇa Yājñavalkya is undoubtedly the sole authority.

95. Sacred Books of the East, Vol. 43, p. XIII.

96. Ś. Br. VI. 2, 1, 15; Kātyāyana suggests an option that instead of killing animals, golden or clay heads of these may be used (XVI. 1, 32).

the Āhavanīya fire and the place from where clay is to be taken is reached by the horse. To the east of the Āhavanīya, a square pit is dug and a ball of clay is put therein. The horse is made to plant its foot on the clay in the pit. The Adhvaryu makes an offering on the clay and also on the horse's foot-print. He then digs and deposits the lump of clay on a lotus leaf, kept on a spread-out black antelope skin. After the clay has been taken down, water is poured in it and the goat's hair and gravel, stone and iron-rust are mixed with it. From the clay thus mixed, the wife of the sacrificer forms the first brick called the Āṣāḍha. With the same clay the sacrificer prepares an ukhā (fire-pan) and also three bricks called the Viśvajyotis bricks. The fire-pan is first fumigated with the smoke and then put on fire for being baked. Afterwards, goat's milk is sprinkled on it and other bricks are made and baked till they are red.

The dīkṣā for the rite takes place on the amāvasyā of the Phālguna. The dīkṣanīyā īṣṭi and other usual rites are performed. The Adhvaryu puts the fire-pan on the fire and puts thereon thirteen kindling-sticks, one span in length. The fire-pan is carried and placed in a śikyā (netting) by the sacrificer and fire is put into it. Afterwards, the sacrificer adores the fire with the Vātsapra hymns and takes the Viṣṇu-strides; he also removes the ashes, puts fuel-sticks on the fire in the ukhā.

Then follows the building of the altar. Both Gārha-patya- and Āhavanīya-altars are prepared. First, the plot to be used as Vedī is measured with a rope which is in length twice the height of the sacrificer. The ground for the uttaravedī on which the altar is to be constructed is ploughed with an Udumbara plough and the ropes are made of muñjā. The altar has five layers and may have several forms. Bricks of different shapes and also having different names are required to build the altar and they are to be arranged in peculiar ways to give a particular shape. Each brick is to be placed after repeating a mantra. In the first layer, bricks are in the form of a lotus leaf, a gold plate and a golden man. The sacrificer offers on the gold-man with ghee. In this layer also are laid a living tortoise as a brick, a mortar and pestle and the heads of the five victims (man, horse, ram, bull and he-goat) are laid down and upon them also an offering is made.

In this way other layers are laid down one after another and the time by which the piling should be completed varies according to the views of different scholars. Some think that the piling takes one year or all the layers may be laid in a few days. When all the layers are completed, the āhavanīya fire is established on the altar so built and an offering of the milk of a dark cow whose calf is white is made on that fire. The Śatarudrīya homa is offered to Rudra. The Adhvaryu sings sāmans round the altar and makes

it complete. Afterwards, the sacrificer mounts upon the altar and makes several libations and offerings.

The Agnicayana or the Fire-piling ceremony, specially included in the Yajurveda Brāhmanas, undoubtedly represents the prevailing cosmogonic and theosophic speculations of the time. The making of the bricks and the process of piling them up symbolise Prajāpati's cosmic creation.

The cosmogonic significance of the fire-piling has been indicated in the Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa itself. More than once, it has stated that the fire-building represents all the world: "This fire-altar is these worlds" (ime vai lōkā eso'gniḥ — VII. 3, 1, 13; IX. 1, 2, 14). In Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa (X. 1, 2, 2; 5, 4, 1ff.) the fire-altar has definitely been identified with this terrestrial world. It has also been identified with Prajāpati, the Lord of Creation: "Prajāpati is no other than the Fire-altar which is here built up, and what five mortal parts there were of him, they are these layers of earth; and those which were immortal they are these layers of bricks."<sup>97</sup> The making of the fire-pan has been stated as the making of the worlds (ukhāṁ karoti imāṁstallokān karoti — VI. 5, 3, 3), while the making of

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97. S. Br. X. 1, 3, 5: sa yaḥ sa prājapatih / ayameva sa yo'yamagnis' cīyate'tha yā asya tāḥ pañca martyāstanva āsan netāstāḥ purīṣacitayo'tha yā amṛtā etāstā iṣṭākacitayaḥ / Also VI. 5, 3, 7; VII. 2, 4, 30; VIII. 2, 1, 18; X. 4, 1, 12.

the bricks is identified with the production of offsprings (VI. 5, 3, 5). Sometimes the construction of the fire-altar has been conceived as reconstructing Prajāpati: "Prajāpati, who became relaxed, is this very Fire-altar which here is built; and those joints of his, the days and nights which had become relaxed"<sup>98</sup>. ~~Again~~ The fire-altar has<sup>also</sup> been identified with the year, which again has been identified with Prajāpati.

Thus we find that the Agnicayana gives ample scope for philosophical speculations. The Brāhmaṇa-texts develop their views about the cosmology, Prajāpati, saṁvatsara etc. in connection with the Agnicayana. These views may not be said to be precise and systematic. But in these<sup>are</sup> the germs of the Upaniṣadic spiritualism and from that point of view they are important.

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98. S. Br. X. 1, 1, 3: sa yaḥ sa saṁvatsarah prajāpatir-vysraṁsata / ayameva sa yo'yamagnis' cīyate'tha yānyasya tānyahorātrāṇi parvāṇi vyasraṁsanteṣṭakā eva tastad yadetā upadadhāti / Also VII. 4, 1, 16; VIII. 2, 2, 6; IX. 4, 1, 3, etc.

RELIGIOUS CONDITION - PRIESTHOOD

Vedic priesthood is essentially connected with sacrifice. If sacrifice originated as a means of propitiating the gods, then the priests are the persons who were believed to render great spiritual service in the matter. I do not propose to deal with the origin of priesthood which would take me far away into the sphere which is not very clear to our view being itself obscure, dubious and controversial. I shall enter straight into the discussion of the extent of the power, position and functions of the priests, as can be gathered from the Brāhmanas and specially in the Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa.

It is evident that whatever might be the cause of the origin of priesthood, the importance of the office of the priest must have gradually increased along with the growing importance of the cult of sacrifice in the Brāhmanas. The simplicity and freshness of the religious atmosphere of the R̥gveda gave place to the excessive artificiality of sacerdotalism in the Brāhmanic period. In a word, sacrifice becomes all-important in the Brāhmanas and even the immortality of the gods is believed to depend upon the performance of sacrifices.<sup>1</sup> The very existence of the huge bulk of the Brāhmanic literature itself is a proof to show the full-fledged development of the sacrificial system in those days because the Brāhmanic works contain mainly speculations on the different aspects of the performance of the sacrifices. This supreme position of the sacrifice has

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1. S. Br. III. 1, 4, 3.

naturally helped the priests to have exalted power and position in the Brāhmanic age. Gradually they have prevailed upon the people's mind to have regard for the mysterious effect of the sacrifice, and, consequently, to look upon the priests with a sense of honour and dignity. The patriarchal head of the family can no longer conduct the various types of sacrifices, because the highly elaborate and complex rituals of this period need special training on the part of the priests. With the growth of the rituals the number of the priests also has increased. Priesthood has gradually become a regular profession and to some extent hereditary.

At the same time, the mechanical performance of the Vedic rites which is being emphasized in this period, affects the high position of the gods of the earlier Vedic pantheon and the priests as the performers of these rites assumed added importance. The Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa has repeatedly endowed the priests with divine quality: "Verily, there are two kinds of gods; for indeed, the gods are the gods; and the Brāhmanas who have studied and teach sacred lore are the human gods"<sup>2</sup> and further adds that "these two kinds of gods, when gratified, convey him to the heavenly world."<sup>3</sup>

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2. dvayā vai devā devāḥ / ahaiva devā atha ye brāhmaṇāḥ  
sūsruvāṁso'nūcānās te manuṣya devāḥ / Ś. Br. II, 2, 2, 6;  
also Ś. Br. II. 4, 3, 14.
  3. Ś. Br. IV. 3, 4, 4 : ..... te enamubhaye devāḥ prītāḥ  
svargaṁ lokāṁ abhivahanti /

That the priests have attained an authoritative voice in this period is again indicated by a reference in the Śat. Brāhmaṇa where Hotṛ, who recites the kindling verses (Sāmīdhenīḥ) has been described as unassailable, unapproachable. He is brilliant like the fire that blazes, when kindled by means of the kindling verses, and just as one undergoes suffering on approaching a fire, so also does one undergo suffering for cursing the priest who knows and recites the kindling verses.<sup>4</sup> The Ś. Br. describes the Brāhmaṇas or the priests as the guardians of the sacrifice. "They are versed in the sacred writ, because they spread it, they originate it. For this reason it is said the Brāhmaṇas are the guardians of the sacrifice."<sup>5</sup> So much importance is given to them that it has been expressly stated in the Brāhmaṇa that if the priests are satisfied in a sacrifice, then the whole sacrifice becomes successful (I. 7, 3, 28). The high importance of the priests is further indicated, though indirectly, in the Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa when it says metaphorically that the sacrifice is like a ship sailing heavenward; if there be a sinful priest in it that one priest would make it sink.<sup>6</sup>

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4. Ś. Br. I. 4, 3, 22.

5. ete vai brāhmaṇā yajñasya prāvitāro ye'nūcānā ete hyenaṁ tanvata eta' enaṁ janayanti tadū ebhyo nihnute tasmādāhabrāhmaṇā asya yajñasya prāvitāra iti / Ś. Br. I. 5, 1, 12.

6. Ś. Br. IV. 2, 5, 10.



At the same time it appears from a perusal of the Brāhmanas that Vedic priesthood, along with its attainment of power and dignity, has high ideals also. There seems to be least doubt that the priests are fully aware of their noble duty and responsibility. The priests are generally Brāhmanas — the section of people in the society who generally devote themselves to the study and preservation of the sacred knowledge of India i.e. the Vedas.<sup>7</sup> The repeated eulogy related to the wise and learned Brāhmanas who act as priests in the Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa also testifies to the high ideal which the priests have to fulfil in this age.<sup>8</sup>

While discussing the position and function of the priests in the sacrificial system of the Brāhmanical period we must specially mention the position of the Purohita who seem to attain the status of an important personage from a very early time. At first, he was probably the family priest to the chiefs or kings but later "he appears to have gradually raised himself to the dignity of, so to say, a minister of public worship and confidential adviser of the king."<sup>9</sup> He should be distinguished from the sacrificial priests (or ṛtvijaḥ) who are employed by the sacrificer for

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7. S. Br. III. 5, 3, 12 : ye vai brāhmaṇāḥ śusruvāṃso' nūcānās te viprāḥ ..... etc.

8. cf. ye brāhmaṇāḥ śusruvāṃso' nūcānā vidvāṃso yajayanti saivāhvaitān nedīṣṭhamāmiva manyāmaha itī / S. Br. III. 1, 1, 5.

9. Eggeling - SBE, Vol. XII, p. xii.

the performance of different kinds of sacrifice. But as Agni is often mentioned in the R.V.<sup>10</sup> both as Hotṛ and as Purohita, and sometimes simultaneously in the same mantra,<sup>11</sup> it seems very probable that the Purohita also took part in the performance of sacrifices; in the R̥gvedic period when the sacrificial system had not become much complicated the Purohita himself performed the duties of the chief priest, the Hotṛ as the reciter of the important mantras. This may be supported by the further evidence that in the R.V. the two divine Hotṛs of the Āprī hymns are called the divine Purohitas<sup>12</sup> and in another hymn Devāpi is Purohita and Hotṛ.<sup>13</sup> In the later Brāhmanic age, it seems possible that the Purohita, when he actually takes part in the sacrifice acts as the Brahman priest whose duty is to supervise the whole sacrificial performance. The Śat. Br. gives us evidence in this context. Thus in one place it describes Bṛhaspati as the Purohita of the gods;<sup>14</sup> at another passage he is again referred to as Brahman.<sup>15</sup> Prof. Oldenberg is also of the same opinion.<sup>16</sup> He thinks that in the earlier period the Purohita is normally the hotṛ, the singer par excellence;

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10. R.V. I, 1, 1; III. 3, 2; V. 11, 2.

11. <sup>RV.</sup> I. 1, 1.

12. R.V. X. 70, 7

13. R.V. X. 98, 5

14. Ś.Br. V. 3, 1, 2: bṛhaspatir vai devānām purohitah /

15. Ś. Br. I. 7, 4, 21: bṛhaspatir vai devānām brahmā /

16. H. Oldenberg - Das Religion des Veda, pp. 380-81.

but later when the position of the brahman priest gains importance as the supervisor of the rite, the role of the Purohita in the performance of the sacrifices changes and he begins to act as brahman with his predominating power.

The Purohita, from very ancient times, is the constant adviser of the king in all matters — temporal and spiritual. It is this special duty of the Royal priest that distinguishes him from other priests; it is also at the root of his supreme power and influence in ancient India. The Brāhmaṇa-texts have very often referred to the importance and indispensibility of a Royal priest or the Purohita for a king in ancient India.<sup>17</sup> The Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa also hints upon the universal necessity for a Purohita when it says that even the Asuras had a pair of Purohitas named Marka and Śaṇḍa.<sup>18</sup>

Regarding the function of the Brāhmaṇic Purohita it is evident that though the Purohita is theoretically concerned with the religious rites, his actual activities

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17. The Aitareya Brāhmaṇa has specially dealt with the supreme importance of the Purohita and throws considerable light on the diverse activities of him. The statements like "the priest surrounds and protects the king with his powers just as the ocean girdles the earth", etc. are clearly expressive of the amicable relation between the priesthood and the nobility.

18. Ś. Br. IV. 2, 1, 4.

cover all the spheres of royal administration. In all religious ceremonies performed for the welfare of the royal family or the state, he is the chief supervisor. The mention of the *ṛtviks* or the ceremonial priests and the division of duties among them make it most probable that the actual participation on the part of the Purohita in the minor details of the ceremonials is not always needed; his chief role is probably to conduct the whole ceremonial and to take part in more important affairs when needed.

Besides his religious functions, the Purohita has also his function as the chief adviser in temporal matters or socio-political issues. The epithet '*rāṣṭragopa*' (protector of the realm) which is used in connection with a royal priest by the author of the Ait. Brāhmaṇa,<sup>19</sup> is enough to remind us of the important public functions he has to do. Officially he is not a minister (*mantrin*) and this is evident from the list of officers given in the Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa<sup>20</sup> where the two offices (*viz.* the Purohita and the *Mantrin*) are mentioned separately. But references from the Brāhmanical texts clearly point out the Purohita's administrative ability. It seems that whenever the king has to determine any policy he always takes advice from the family priest. The successful outcome of that policy surely proves the Purohita's able guidance. Sometimes the Brāhmaṇa-priest is so much efficient in administration that he conducts the

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19. A.Br. VIII, 40.2

20. Ś. Br. V. 3, 1, 1-2.

functions of a Purohita simultaneously of more than one king. Thus the Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa records the instance of Devabhāga Śrautarṣi who appears to have been the domestic priest of both the Kurus and the Śrñjāyas.<sup>21</sup> Such simultaneous priesthood naturally depends on the friendly relation between the two countries and it increases the importance of the Purohita. Thus says the Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa in clear terms : "A very high position is held by him who is Purohita in one kingdom; how much higher then is the position of the Purohita of two kingdoms."<sup>22</sup>

#### The Sacrificial Priests

Although the Purohita is the main prop of the institution, Vedic priesthood really consists of the ṛtvijs or the 'sacrificial priests', who are essential for the performance of different sacrifices. The Brāhmaṇa-texts, while recording the sacrificial details give account of the particular duties of these priests.

The word ṛtvik is generally associated with the word ṛtu (season) and signifies that being employed at the time of the performance of particular sacrificial session, the ṛtvik discharges his duties according to proper rules.<sup>23</sup>

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21. Ś. Br. II. 4, 4, 5.

22. paramatā vai sā yo nvevaikasya rāṣṭrasya purohito 'sat sā nveva paramatā kiṃvau yo dvayoh paramatāmiva ha vai gacohati / Ś. Br. II. 4, 4, 5.

23. Pāṇini in his Aṣṭādhyāyī (III. 2. 59) shows the derivation

This is where the Purohita and the ṛtvijs are distinguished from one another. The Purohita is the Royal chaplain and is constantly associated with the king. The ṛtvijs on the other hand, are temporarily appointed priests in a particular performance.

Regarding the qualities of a sacrificial priest it is the general brāhmanic notion that a priest should be a Brāhmana.<sup>24</sup> Even a Kṣatriya or a Vaiśya, when permitted to officiate in certain ceremonies, becomes a Brāhmana (and is addressed as such) for the occasion, by means of the dīkṣā or rite of initiation.<sup>25</sup>

But being a Brāhmana by caste is not the only qualification of a priest; more essential is the quality of possessing good knowledge in the sacred lore. The Śat. Brāhmana clearly states that the priests should be well-versed in sacred texts.<sup>26</sup> It has further been said there that "if there are learned and efficient priests in a sacrifice, then

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of the word ṛtviḥ from the word ṛtu (season) and the root /yaj (to worship) with the meaning of 'one who sacrifices in due time, being employed in particular season'. cf. Kāśikā — ṛtusābda upapade yajer dhātoḥ kvīm pratyayo nipātyate — ṛtau yajati, ṛtuṃ vā yajati, ṛtu prayukto vā yajati, ṛtvik / (p. 179).

24. Ś. Br. III. 5, 3, 12: ye vai brāhmaṇāḥ śusruvām so' nūcānāste viprā....

25. Cf. Ś. Br. III. 2, 1, 39; XIII, 4, 1, 3.

26. Ś. Br. I. 5, 1, 12: ete vai brāhmaṇā yajñasya prāvitāra ye' nūcānā . . . . etc.

there would be no harm to the sacrificer. For that is the perfection of the sacrifice when the wise priests assist the sacrificer in performing the sacrifice."<sup>27</sup> Also the priests in general are expected to be pure in conduct. According to the Śat. Brāhmaṇa "a priest from a good family (ārṣeya) is identical with all the deities."<sup>28</sup> At the same time mutual co-operation among the priests is thought to be an essential factor. At Ś. Br. I. 5, 2, 15, it has been said that where the officiant priests perform the sacrifice with a perfect mutual agreement there everything works regularly and no hitch occurs.<sup>29</sup> Elsewhere it has been said that "where the officiant priests perform the sacrifice with a perfect mutual agreement there it will indeed rain."<sup>30</sup>

The number of priests in the Brāhmaṇic period evidently increases more than that mentioned in the R.V. The non-complicated form of ritual in the Rgvedic age did not require too many priests, nor was the assignment of separate duties or separate designations to them always strictly done. But with the quantitative growth of performance in the Brāhmaṇic age the number of priests

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27. Ś. Br. V. 1, 1, 9-10.

28. brāhmaṇo vā ārṣeyaḥ sarvā devatāḥ . . . etc. Ś. Br., XII. 4, 4, 7.

29. yatra haivamṛtvijaḥ saṁvidānā yaज्ञेना caranti sarvameva tatra kalpate na muḥhyati.

30. Varsati haiva tatra yatraivamṛtvijaḥ saṁvidānā yaज्ञेना caranti / Ś. Br. I. 5, 2, 19.

necessarily increases and the assignment of separate designations with separate duties to different priests becomes necessary also. Evidently the Soma-ritual involves overgrowth of sacrificial duties and requires a large number of priests and we can get a full view of the Vedic priesthood in the Soma-sacrifice of the Brāhmaṇas. Here the number of priests rises to sixteen,<sup>31</sup> classified in four groups in the ritual texts in the following order :

Hotṛ with Maitrāvaruṇa, Acchāvāka and Grāvastut  
as his assistants;

Adhvaryu with Pratiprasthātṛ, Neṣṭṛ and Unnetṛ  
as his assistants;

Udgātṛ and his three assistants — Prastotṛ,  
Pratihātṛ and Subrahmanya; and

Brahman with Brāhmaṇācchamsin, Potṛ and Āgnīdhara.

All these sixteen priests are called ṛtvij and being chosen by the Yajamāna or the sacrificer they perform the sacrifice in favour of him. The Kauṣītakin school, however, adds a seventeenth ṛtvij to this list of sixteen and calls him 'Sadasya';<sup>32</sup> he is in charge of the general inspection of the sacrifice. The Kauṣītaki Brāhmaṇa confirms this,<sup>33</sup> but in the Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa the employment of a seventeenth

31. Cf. S. Br., X. 4, 1, 19: eṣa soṃyo'dhvaro'tha yā asya tāḥ ṣoḍaśa kalā ete te ṣoḍaśartvijah /

32. Cf. Āśv. Grhyasūtra, I. 22; Āp. X. 1, 10, 11

33. <sup>K. Br. XVII. 7.</sup> Some authorities regard 'yajamāna' or the sacrificer as the seventeenth priest, since he has to take part in some sacrificial rites.



priest has been clearly forbidden.<sup>34</sup> There are also other persons required in a sacrifice and mentioned in different Brāhmaṇa-texts as the Śamītr̥ (the slayer), the Vaikartas (the butchers), the Camasādhvaryus (the assistants of the Adhvaryu), but they are not called ṛtvij because they do not rank as such.

This large number of priests is not required in all types of Śrauta sacrifices; they are required only in certain grand sacrifices. The Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa gives us specific information about the number of priests and their respective peculiar duties for each type of offering. Thus for the Agnīhotra and the Aupāsana the Adhvaryu alone is enough; for the Agnyādhāna and the Darsāpūrṇamāsa four priests viz. the Adhvaryu, the Agnīdh, the Hotṛ and the Brahman are required; for the Cāturmāsya or the four monthly offerings the number is five with the Pratiprasthātr̥ added to the above four; and for the Pasubandha or the animal offering besides the Śamītr̥ (the slayer) who is not a priest in the full sense, we have Maitrāvaruṇa as the sixth priest. In the Soma-ritual all the sixteen priests are necessary. This frame of priestly setting is also prescribed later in the śrauta ritual-texts.

Among all these priests, four are prominent, namely, the Hotṛ, the Adhvaryu, the Udgātr̥ and the Brahman. The Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa has explained the greatness of these

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34. S. Br., X. 4, 1, 19: na saptadaśamṛtvijaṃ kurvīta /

four thus — in the Aśvamedha sacrifice when the sacrificial horse is immolated, his (Prajāpati's) greatness goes away and it enters into these priests. Hence they become the chief among the priests.<sup>35</sup> The others are the assistant priests and sometimes they are identified with the chief priests.<sup>36</sup>

Now the position and functions of the four chief priests should be dealt with. These priests are generally associated with the four Vedas, such as Hotṛ with the Ṛ.V., Adhvaryu with the Yajurveda, Udgātṛ with the Sāmaveda, and last of all, Brahmā with all these three Vedas.<sup>37</sup> Of these four the Hotṛ priest possesses a position which appears to be the oldest. In the earliest stage of priesthood when he is probably the only priest, he does everything necessary in offering oblations to the gods. When however, in the later period, the duties of the Adhvaryu separated and precisely formulated, the functions of the Hotṛ become limited to the recitation of the Ṛgvedic hymns. Yet in the Brāhmaṇas the Hotṛ is no less important because it is he who first invokes the deities by the recitation of the hymns of

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35. S. Br. XIII. 1, 1, 4: prajāpatir yajñamasṛjata / tasya mahimāpākrāmat sa mahartvijah prāvisāt taṁ mahartvigbhiranvaichat taṁ mahartvigbhir anvavindaṭ yan mahartvijah ..... etc.

36. Cf. S. Br. XIII, 4, 1, 4: adhvaryuś ca hotā ca brahmā codgātā caitān va anvanya ṛtvijah /

37. S. Br. XI. 5, 8, 7: yadrcā houtranī kriyate yajuṣādhvarayavaṁ sāmnoḍgītho' tha kena brahmatvamityanayā trayyā vidyayeti ha brūyāt /

the R.V. in their honour and then the oblations are offered by the Adhvaryu. In a passage of the Śat. Brāhmaṇa his importance has been shown by identifying him with the sacrifice itself.<sup>38</sup> Regarding his function it should be pointed out that he, being a priest of the R.V., the Rgveda-Brāhmaṇas specially deal with the duties and functions of the Hotṛ and his assistants. The Śat. Brāhmaṇa, though mainly deals with the duties of the Yajurvedic priests occasionally refers to the duties of the Hotṛ. In a sacrifice the Hotṛ recites the invitatory verses, the litanies (śāstras) and the offering-verses and also utters the Vaśat-call. Being formally chosen he takes the Hotṛ's seat and goes on muttering formulae.<sup>39</sup> In different sacrifices he has some special duties to perform. Thus in the Darśapūrṇamāsa sacrifices he recites the Sāmīdhenī-verses and enkindles the fire (I. 3, 5, 1). He also utters the Ārṣeya Hotṛ-pravara (I. 4, 2, 3). At the end of the sacrifice it is he who invokes the blessings (I. 9, 1, 2). In the Soma-sacrifices he recites the Āprī-verses (III. 8, 1, 2), the morning prayers (III. 9, 3, 10) and the catur-hotṛ formulas (IV. 6, 9, 18). In the Aśvamedha sacrifice the Hotṛ narrates the Pāriplava legend (XIII. 4, 3, 2). In the same performance he is seen as taking part in the Brahmodya (theological discussion) which is regarded as a part of the Aśvamedha sacrifice (XIII. 2, 6, 9).

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38. Ś. Br. VI. 4, 2, 7: agnir vai hotā .... etc.

39. Ś. Br. I. 5, 1, 12.

Adhvaryu :

The Yajurvedic priest Adhvaryu is entrusted more with the practical side of a sacrificial performance than its theoretical or intellectual side. In other words, he does all the manual activities in a sacrificial performance. The importance of Adhvaryu is evident from the fact that nothing in a sacrificial performance is done without the direction of the Adhvaryu. The Śat. Brāhmaṇa likens the Yajus which is connected with the Adhvaryu (XI. 5, 8, 7) with the mind, while the ṛc and Sāman are described as speech. Between mind and speech mind is evidently prominent, because "speech does not speak anything which is not conceived by the mind."<sup>40</sup> Adhvaryu is said to be the 'forepart of the sacrifice'<sup>41</sup> or 'the head of the sacrifice'.<sup>42</sup> It is he who spreads the sacrifice.<sup>43</sup> Accordingly Yāska says in his Nirukta that it is Adhvaryu who keeps the sacrifice in motion.<sup>44</sup> Some of the special duties of the Adhvaryu in different performances are mentioned here —

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40. Ś. Br. IV. 6, 7, 19 : vāgevarṇasā sāmanī ca / mana eva yajūṃsi sa ya ṛcā ca sāmā ca caranti vāk te . bhavantyatha ye yajusā caranti manas te bhavanti ..... no hya nabhiḡgataṃ manasā vāg vadati /
41. Ś. Br. I. 9, 2, 3 : pūrvārdho vai yajñasya adhvaryuḥ.../
42. Ś. Br. IV. 1, 5, 16 : mukhyou vā āvām yajñasya svo yādhvaryū ..... etc.
43. Ś. Br. V. 5, 5, 8.
44. adhvarāṃ yunakti iti adhvaryuḥ / Nir. I. 8, 1

In the Darsāpūrṇamāsa sacrifices he has to look into the sacrificial butter (I. 3, 2, 26-28). He requests the Hotṛ to recite the invitory and offering verses at the time of making offerings (I. 8, 2, 14). He also performs the Patnīsaṃyājas (II. 5, 2, 45) and Samiṣṭayajus (II. 5, 2, 46) in the Darsāpūrṇamāsa. In the Soma-sacrifice he speaks with the person who sells the Soma (III. 3, 3, 1) and draws the Soma-cups (IV. 2, 1, 1ff.). In the Rājasūya he performs the abhiṣeka to the king (V. 4, 2, 1). In the Aśvamedha he takes part in the dialogue with a maiden (XIII. 5, 2, 4) and also in the theological discussion (XIII. 5, 2, 12-13). He consecrates the four persons viz. the sacrificer, the Brahman, the Udgāṭṛ and the Hotṛ in a sacrificial session (XII. 1, 1, 1-4). In the fire-altar-building, the Adhvaryu along with his duties has to sing sāmans also (IX. 1, 2, 43).

#### Udgāṭṛ:

The priests of the Sāmaveda viz. the Udgāṭṛ and his three assistants are undoubtedly new additions during the Brāhmanic times.<sup>45</sup> He is concerned with the Soma-yāga

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45. The offices of the Udgāṭṛ and also of the Brahmā of the later period were not known in the R.V. but they are indispensable in the solemn sacrifices like the Somayāga. Their introduction thus marks a new epoch in the history of sacrificial ritual inasmuch as this indicates the final stage of elaborate sacrificial system of the later Vedic period. It should be noticed in this connection that though we do not hear the name of the Udgāṭṛ priest

and his main function is to sing the chants. He has also some minor duties such as taking part in a dialogue with Vāvatā and in the Brahmodya.

Brahman :

Like the Udgātr priest the Brahman also has a later origin in Vedic ritualism in the sense that though his name appears in the R.V. in the list of priests he does not appear to have acquired that supervising character with which he appears in the Brāhmanas.<sup>46</sup> The necessity and importance of the Brahman priest originates from the complicated and multifarious performance of sacrifices in the later period. As the performance has not become much complicated in the Rgvedic period, the idea of Brahmā as a supervising priest naturally does not develop there.

The priest Brahman is not only later in origin, his inclusion among the group of the sacrificial priests and

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in the Rgveda his function was probably not unknown as is evident from the mention of the terms stu or gai (meaning to sing) in connection with the Rgvedic hymns. It may follow from this that the custom of chanting hymns in praise of the deities which is the chief function of the Udgātr is not totally absent in the Rgveda, but there is no separate office to perform this duty which is perhaps included in those of the Hotars.

46. Prof. Oldenberg thinks that the term Brahman mentioned in the Rgvedic list means merely a priest. Cf. Religion des Veda, pp. 396, 397. Prof. Keith, together with some other scholars, thinks that this Brahman priest of the R.V. later comes to be designated as Brāhmaṇacchanāsin in the Brāhmanas to distinguish him from the supervising priest of later ritual who is again styled as Brahman. Cf. Vedic Index, Vol. II, p. 78.

his connection with a particular Veda is also a matter of much disputation. Even in the period of the Brāhmaṇas there was difference of opinion whether the Adhvaryu himself belonging to the Yajurveda, would do the function as Brahman or a priest belonging to the Sāmaveda or even to the R̥gveda should be employed as Brahman.<sup>47</sup> Finally, it has been settled even in the Brāhmaṇic period that the Brahman-priest should have three-fold knowledge i.e. he must be versed in all the three Vedas. Regarding his appointment the Śat. Brāhmaṇa further states that in the earlier times a person belonging to the Vasiṣṭha family alone could do the work as the Brahman.<sup>48</sup> But in the later period anyone can be the Brahman.

While the priests belonging to the other three Vedas have their importance accordingly as they perform particular functions in particular rites, the Brahman priest has no such particular function; on the other hand Brahman of the later period has acquired a special position and supreme importance among the Vedic priesthood. Particularly in the Śat. Brāhmaṇa he has turned out to be the most important personality. He is described there as the guardian of the sacrifice.<sup>49</sup> Elsewhere the Brāhmaṇa glorifies him as

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47. Cf. KB. VI. 11.

48. Ś. Br. XI. 5, 8, 7.

The Gopatha Brāhmaṇa, however, which itself belongs to the AV., clearly mentions that the Brahman-priest belongs to the AV. Cf. GB. I. 2, 19.

49. Ś. Br. I. 7, 4, 18 : brahmā vai yajñasya dakṣiṇata āste abhigoptā saḥ ..... etc.

the entire sacrifice.<sup>50</sup> He is also described there as the physician<sup>51</sup> who looks after the sacrifice and restores it, while the other priests tear the sacrifice to pieces and injure it. The significance is that he makes good any error which is liable to be made on the part of other priests while carrying out the complicated performance. He is a supervisor and it is consequently expected that he must be the possessor of the three kinds of knowledge (trayī) on which all Śrauta-rituals are based. But possessed of every knowledge, the Brahman in the Brāhmaṇas speaks the least. The Śat. Brāhmaṇa describes him as sitting silently south of the sacrifice : "The Brahman must maintain silence (from the time he takes his seat on being elected) upto the speech of the Adhvaryu, 'Brahman, shall I step forward?'"<sup>52</sup> Thus it seems that the Brahman with his sound knowledge of sacerdotalism occupies such an important position that only by his silent presence the sacrifice is expected to be performed flawlessly. "He is actually declared to be as important for the sacrifice as all the other priests put together."<sup>53</sup> The

50. Ś. Br. VI. 2, 2, 40 : brahmā vai sarvo yajñah ... /

51. Ś. Br. I. 7, 4, 19 : brahmā vāṇtviṣṇuḥ bhiṣak /

52. Ś. Br. I. 7, 4, 19.

53. A.B. Keith : ERE, Vol. XII, p. 313 (313)

This is supported by the statement in the Ait. Brāhmaṇa that of the sacrificial fee, which is to be offered to the officiating priests, half the portion goes to the Brahman and the remaining half to the other priests.



Śat. Brāhmaṇa however, occasionally mentions some of his minor functions, such as in the Pravargya-ceremony he utters the anumantṛaṇa formula (XIV. 2, 2, 19) and in the Asvamedha sacrifice he takes part in the dialogue with the Mahiṣī (XIII. 5, 2, 5) and in the Brahmodya (XIII. 5, 2, 14-15).

#### The Assisting Priests:

Each of the chief priests are assisted by a group of assistants who have their respective duties in different performances. First of all, the Ṛgvedic priest Hotṛ has three assistants, viz. Maitrāvaruṇa, Achāvāka and Grāvastut. Among them the Maitrāvaruṇa is the first assistant of the Hotṛ. In the Śat. Brāhmaṇa he has been identified with the mind of the sacrifice.<sup>54</sup> Regarding his function, the Śat. Brāhmaṇa informs us that he shares in the drinking of the Sārasvata-cup (XII. 8, 2, 23) and in the Dasapeya performance which is included in the Rājasūya he gets the share of a barren cow (V. 4, 5, 22). The Ait. Brāhmaṇa mentions that Maitrā-varuṇa recites litanies to the gods Mitra and Varuṇa in the mid-day Some-pressure<sup>55</sup> and the designation Maitrā-varuṇa is due to this special function. The Maitrāvaruṇa of the Brāhmaṇas probably has his origin in the Prasāstr or Upavakṛ of the Ṛgvedic list of priests or in the Sāmstr mentioned in the Nābhānediṣṭha hymn of the RV.

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54. Ś. Br. XII. 8, 2, 23: (Vāg vai yajñasya hotā hr̥dayam brahmā) mano maitrāvaruṇa.

55. Cf. AB. V. 4.

Achāvāka as an assistant of the Hotṛ (XII. 1, 1, 8) is clearly an addition to the priests in the later Brāhmaṇic age and he seems to have no predecessor in the RV. To establish his importance the Śat. Brāhmaṇa has connected him with Indra and Agni : "Previously the Achāvāka was excluded from Soma. Indra and Agni preserved Soma for him. Therefore he is said to belong to Indra and Agni.<sup>56</sup> Like Indra and Agni he is also called a 'productive pair' (mithuna) (IV. 3, 1, 3). Regarding his functions the Śat. Brāhmaṇa mentions little but these have been fully recorded in the Rgvedic Brāhmaṇa Aitareya and from it we know that the Achāvāka recites a litany to Indra and Agni in the morning pressure in a Soma-sacrifice.

Besides these two there is the third assistant of the Hotṛ viz. the Grāvastut (XII. 1, 1, 9). He is too probably later in origin. The Śat. Brāhmaṇa pays no importance to this office and says very little regarding his specific duties; but the very name Grāvastut suggests that this priest had the duty of praising the stones probably used for pressing the Soma.

The assistant-group of Adhvaryu consists of the three priests, viz. the Pratiprasthātṛ, the Neṣṭṛ and the Unneṭṛ. Among them, the Pratiprasthātṛ is undoubtedly the most important. The office of the Pratiprasthātṛ seems to have existed from a very remote past. In the Ait. Brāhmaṇa

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56. Ś. Br. III. 6, 2, 12-13.

(I. 18) and also in the Śat. Brahmana the two Asvīnas are said to be the two Adhvaryu priests of the gods<sup>57</sup> and in these two instances we may, instead of taking a plurality of the Adhvaryu priests, understand one as the Adhvaryu priest and the other as his constant assistant, the Prati-prasthātr̥. The reason behind such supposition may be that in the Śat. Brāhmaṇa itself the Pratiprasthātr̥ is said to be not only the Adhvaryu's assistant (XII. 1, 1, 7) but also his imitator.<sup>58</sup> As an assistant of the Adhvaryu, he has many important jobs to do. In the Soma-sacrifice he even makes an offering of ghee on a piece of gold placed on the right wheel-track of the northern Soma-cart (III. 5, 1, 14). He also assists in drawing the Soma-cups (IV, 3, 1, 4ff.). In the sacrificial performance called Varuṇa-praghāsa he asks the wife of the sacrificer whether she carries on intercourse with another other than her husband, and thus let her sin become less being confessed.<sup>59</sup> In the animal-sacrifice made to Agni and Soma, Pratiprasthātr̥ roasts the omentum (III. 8, 2, 20) and in a sacrificial session he consecrates the four other priests viz. the Adhvaryu, the Brāhmaṇācchāmsin, the Prastotr̥ and the Maitrāvaruṇa (XII. 1, 1, 5-6).

The other two assistants of the Adhvaryu viz. the Neṣṭr̥ (XII. 1, 1, 9) and the Unnetr̥ are of use mainly

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57. Ś. Br. I. 1, 2, 17

58. Ś. Br. II. 5, 2, 34: kṛtānukāra eva pratiprasthātā.

59. Ś. Br. II. 5, 2, 19ff.

in the Soma-sacrifice. Of them two, the Neṣṭṛ does the function of leading up the sacrificer's wife to see the Soma-cow.<sup>60</sup> He also leads her up when the Pātnīvata graha is drawn (IV. 4, 2, 17-18). In the Vājapeya sacrifice he himself draws the cups of liquor (V. 1, 2, 16ff.). He also consecrates the priests like the Pratiprasthāṭṛ, the Potṛ, the Pratihartṛ and the Achāvāka in a sacrificial session (XII. 1, 1, 7-8). The other assistant the Unnetṛ, however, holds an important office. In fact, he is an 'excess' (atirikta) as mentioned in the Śāt. Brāhmaṇa,<sup>61</sup> though in a particular sacrifice named Garga-trirātra we find the mention of two Unnetṛs (IV, 5, 8, 12). He attends the Adhvaryu in the Soma-sacrifice and when the Adhvaryu pours juice out of the Āgrāyana-cup, the Unnetṛ adds some more juice from the Ādhvānīya (IV, 3, 5, 21). He also takes part in consecrating the priests like the Neṣṭṛ, the Agnīdh, the Subrahmanya and the Grāvastut (XII. 1, 1, 9).

The Sāmavedic priest Udgāṭṛ similarly has three assistants, the Prastotṛ (XII. 1, 1, 6), Subrahmanya (XII. 1, 1, 9) and the Pratihartṛ (XII. 1, 1, 10). The Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa mentions their names but regarding them it speaks nothing much, except that the Prastotṛ is described as the speech of the sacrifice<sup>62</sup> and the Pratihartṛ as the physician of the sacrifice.<sup>63</sup>

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60. Ś. Br. III. 8, 2, 1.

61. Ś. Br. IV, 4, 3, 8 : atirikto vā unnetā ..... etc.

62. Ś. Br. IV. 2, 5, 3 : prastotā vāgeva yajñasya.

63. Ibid : pratihartā bhiṣagvā.

Among the three priests who are generally supposed to belong to the Brahman-group (XII. 1, 1, 6, 8-9), the priest called Brāhmaṇācchāmsin originates in the later Brāhmaṇic period, while the other two priests, the Agnīdhra and the Potr were already known in the R̥gvedic period. The origin of Brāhmaṇācchāmsin has been narrated in a legend in the Śat. Brāhmaṇa and he has there been connected with Indra, the strongest among all the gods.<sup>64</sup> He sits on the southern part of the sacrifice as an assistant of Brahman.

The Potr-priest, though mentioned as an assistant of the Brahman (XII. 1, 1, 8) actually does the work of an assistant to the Hotr and takes part in recitation.

The third priest viz. the Āgnīdhra has some importance as a priest and some important functions also are ascribed to him. As his name indicates, the Āgnīdhra (or Agnīt) has some connection with Agni and actually one of the duties of Āgnīdhra is to prepare the fire and to look after the fire-places (dhiṣṇyas). Though categorically an assistant of the Brahman, (XII. 1, 1, 9), he also functions more as a helper of the Adhvaryu. In every solem sacrifice, the Āgnīdhra specially utters the famous formula — astu śrausāt (May the god hear) as often as the Adhvaryu offers oblations accompanied by the anuvākya and the yājyā mantras uttered by the Hotr. During the principal offerings (generally beginning from the time of the Prayājas to the performance of the Svistakṛt) the Āgnīdhra holds in his hand

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64. Ś. Br. IV, 6, 6, 1ff.

a wooden sword called sphya with twelve stalks of kuśa grass called idhmasannahanāni tied round it. The purpose of this act and of the repeating of the formula 'astu śrausāt' is obviously to protect the sacrifice from evil spirits and the Rakṣas. His importance and indispensibility in a sacrifice is easily surmisable from his identification with Agni.<sup>65</sup> He is also as great as the heaven and the earth.<sup>66</sup> His special duties in different performances may be noted as —

In the Darśapūrṇamāsa sacrifice he takes part in the performance called the Stambayajurharana. He goes round to the north of the fire and presses the stambayajus down on the heap of the rubbish (I. 2, 4, 13). He cleans the spoons and vessels (I. 3, 1, 1) and binds the wife of the sacrificer (I. 3, 1, 12). In the performance called Patnīsamāyas, he assists the Adhvaryu (I. 4, 2, 1ff.). In the Dākṣāyaṇeṣṭi he shares the remaining whey along with the Hotṛ, the Adhvaryu and the sacrificer (II. 4, 4, 25). In the Pitṛmedha sacrifice he smells the remaining porridge (II. 6, 1, 33).

In the Soma-sacrifice he keeps the prastara handed over to him by the Adhvaryu in a safe place (III. 4, 3, 22). He recites the offering-verses for the Pātnīvatagraha (IV. 4, 2, 15). In the third-pressing, he stirs the sour milk (IV. 3, 3, 19). In the Śatarudrīya performance, he sprinkles the Vedī (IX. 1, 2, 1).

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65. agniṛeṣo yaḍāgnīdhro no vā ātmātmānam hinasti .... etc.

S. Br. IX. 1, 2, 4.

66. S. Br. I. 8, 1, 41.

Dakṣiṇā (The Sacrificial Fee)

The discussion about Vedic Priesthood will remain incomplete if we leave aside the topic of dakṣiṇā or the sacrificial fee payable to the priests in every sacrifice. The payment of sacrificial fee is deemed compulsory in every ritual-text, because it is considered as one of the limbs of the sacrifice and the performance of sacrifice is thought to remain incomplete as long as the fee is not discharged to the priests.<sup>67</sup> The Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa also variously emphasizes on the necessity of the payment of sacrificial fees. Sometimes it has stated clearly that "no offering should be without dakṣiṇās",<sup>68</sup> sometimes it has tried to show symbolically the indispensibility of dakṣiṇā in a ritual performance. Thus in a creation-legend in the Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa dakṣiṇā along with Yajña (sacrifice) has been symbolically stated to be a couple.<sup>69</sup> This signifies that like a couple the dakṣiṇā and the yajña are inseparably related. But dakṣiṇā is not simply the remuneration or the sacrificial fee payable to the priests by the sacrificer. The Brāhmaṇa-texts have tried to impart a divine stamp to the conception of dakṣiṇā and accordingly the Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa, while giving an etymology for the word dakṣiṇā, explains its significance as follows : The sacrifice while

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67. Ś. Br. III. 5, 1, 18: taḍu taḍ yajñasya karma na vyamucya yaḍ dākṣiṇamāsīt /

68. tasmānnā dakṣiṇena havisā yajeta / Ś. Br., I. 2, 3, 4; also II. 4, 3, 14; IV. 5, 1, 16; XI. 1, 3, 7.

69. → S. Br. IX. 4, 1, 14; ~~the~~ yajña - masculine, dakṣiṇā - feminine, yajña + dakṣiṇā = a couple.

being performed is said to be slain i.e. to loose its vigour. By means of dakṣiṇās the gods again invigorated it; hence the name dakṣiṇā, because thereby they invigorated (adakṣayan) that sacrifice.<sup>70</sup> The Śat. Brāhmaṇa further says that dakṣiṇās are the medicine.<sup>71</sup> By means of dakṣiṇās (or the sacrificial fees to the priests) the priests who are gods in human forms are made satisfied and as a result the sacrificer is placed in a state of bliss.<sup>72</sup> Elsewhere also we read that gifts which are offered to the priests lead the sacrificer to the world of the gods.<sup>73</sup> Finally, the Brāhmaṇa thinks that a sacrifice without the dakṣiṇā is not only incomplete but it also incurs sin. This has been suggested by the statement that the deities called Āptyas became guilty of the crime of brahmahatyā or killing of a Brāhmaṇa when they killed Viśvarūpa, the son of Tvaṣṭṛ on behalf of Indra and they wipe off their sin on a person who makes an offering without dakṣiṇā.<sup>74</sup>

Thus dakṣiṇā is an integral part of a sacrifice, and however small it must be paid without fail in a sacrifice.

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70. Ś. Br. II. 2, 2, 1-2.

The same root (i.e. /dakṣ) is also suggested in the Nirukta while deriving the word dakṣiṇā with the addition that dakṣiṇā is so named because it completes whatever is incomplete. Cf. Nirukta. I. 7.

71. Ś. Br. XII. 7, 1, 14: bheṣajam dakṣiṇāḥ.

72. Ś. Br. II. 2, 2, 6; IV. 3, 4, 4.

73. Ś. Br. IV. 3, 4, 6.

74. Ś. Br. I. 2, 3, 4.



The Śātapatha Brāhmaṇa does not, however, insist on paying enormous fees to the priests, if it is beyond the means of the sacrificer. On the other hand, provision is made for an economically handicapped sacrificer to pay according to his means as is evident from the following statement of the Śat. Brāhmaṇa : "He should give (to the priests) as much as he is able to give, for no oblation should be without a dakṣiṇā."<sup>75</sup>

The priests are also warned against being too much greedy and making bargain with the sacrificer because "by bargaining the priests are deprived of their place in heaven."<sup>76</sup> He may however, refuse a dakṣiṇā and if a dakṣiṇā is refused by a priest due to some reason, no other priest or rather no other person accepts it, for having turned into a lioness it destroys him.<sup>77</sup> Again there seems to exist another rule

that a priest should not give the dakṣiṇā obtained by him to any other person because dakṣiṇā is identified with yasās.<sup>78</sup>

The Brāhmaṇa, however, has made a concession in such matter that one may give dakṣiṇā obtained by him on the morrow or a day after. Only the officiating priests are entitled to receive the dakṣiṇā; no other persons than the officiating priests can receive the fee even though they may be connected

75. yacchaknuyāt taddadyān nādakṣiṇāṁ haviḥ syāditi ....etc./  
S. Br. XI. 1, 4, 4.

76. dakṣiṇāsu tveva na saṁvaditavyaṁ saṁvādenaiva ṛtvijo'  
lokā itī / S. Br. IX. 5, 2, 16.

77. S. Br. III. 5, 1, 25 : tasmān nivṛttadakṣiṇāṁ na prati-  
grhṇīyāt / siṁhī hainaṁ bhūtvā kṣiṇoti ..... /

78. S. Br. XIV. 1, 1, 32.

with the sacrifice. Thus the Śat. Brāhmaṇa openly declares that "the sacrificer should give the gifts to officiating priests and not to non-officiating."<sup>79</sup> Only a special provision is made in the Soma-yāga for offering some gold as a sacrificial gift to an Ātreya who does not officiate as a priest. The provision is made only because he is a descendant of Atri, who as the Hotṛ of the ṛṣis, dispelled once upon a time, the darkness of the Asuras and received gold as a sacrificial gift.<sup>80</sup>

There may be many kinds of dakṣiṇās, differing in quality as well as quantity in different varieties of sacrifices. The Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa says that generally dakṣiṇā is four-fold, viz. gold, cow, cloth and horse.<sup>81</sup> There are certainly many other kinds of dakṣiṇā besides these and the Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa itself has noted them while discussing the rituals. Of the above four, gold is generally the dakṣiṇā in the rites connected with Agni, because gold is the seed of fire.<sup>82</sup> The cow is also regarded as an important material to be offered as dakṣiṇā. At Ś. Br. IV. 5, 10, 7 the cow and the dakṣiṇā are taken as synonymous. The cow may mean cow with a calf or a calf alone or an ox. Clothes are offered as a dakṣiṇā in Traidhātavi Udavāsaniya offering at the end

79. tasmādr̥tvigbhya eva dakṣiṇā dadyān nān̥rtvigbhyah /  
Ś. Br. IV. 3, 4, 5.

80. Ś. Br. IV. 3, 4, 21.

81. Ś. Br. IV. 3, 4, 7: catasro vai dakṣiṇāḥ / hiranyam  
gor vāso'svah ..... etc.

82. Ś. Br. II. 2, 3, 28.

of Rājasūya sacrifice<sup>83</sup> or at the Pausnīṣṭi in the Asvamedha.<sup>84</sup>  
 Horses are required as dakṣiṇā in the Rājasūya sacrifice for  
 Pañcavātiya oblation.<sup>85</sup> Besides these four, we find mention,  
 as dakṣiṇās of things like bows and arrows (XI. 1, 5, 10),  
 claw-shaped knife and dice-board (V. 3, 1, 10), red turban  
 (V. 3, 1, 11) or a staff (XI. 1, 5, 10) and many other kinds  
 of things. Sometimes the dakṣiṇās are not at all attractive,  
 such as in the funeral ceremony the following articles are  
 given as dakṣiṇā viz. an old ox, old barley, an old arm-  
 chair with old head-kushion.<sup>86</sup>

As regards the quantity of the dakṣiṇā, the Brāhmaṇa-  
 text does not mention any hard and fast rule. In some places,  
 the exact number or the quantity of the article to be offered  
 as dakṣiṇā has been stated. But the general rule in this  
 connection seems to be that one should offer sacrificial fee  
 to the priests as much as possible and thus satisfy them.  
 Accordingly the following passage (II. 2, 2, 5) says : "As  
 great as the sacrifice is, as large as its extent is, by so  
 many gifts does he thereby invigorate it. Such is the measure  
 of the priest's fees. But he may give more according to his  
 faith".<sup>87</sup> At another place the Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa further

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83. S. Br. V. 5, 5, 18.

84. S. Br. XIII. 4, 1, 15.

85. S. Br. V. 2, 4, 9.

86. S. Br. XIII. 8, 4, 10.

87. yāvāneva yajño yāvatyasya mātṛā tāvatībhir dakṣayatyeṣā  
 mātṛā dakṣiṇānām dadyāttveva yathāśraddham bhūyasīstad  
 yad dakṣiṇā dadāti / S. Br. II. 2, 2, 5.

describes <sup>88</sup>śraddhā as the foundation (pratiṣṭhā) of the dakṣiṇā. The liberally offered dakṣiṇā on the part of the sacrificer has been highly praised in the Brāhmaṇa : "Whatever dakṣiṇā he gives unhesitatingly, with a liberal mind, thereby he gets great things."<sup>89</sup> At the same time, the ability and difficulty of the sacrificer in offering the prescribed dakṣiṇā, are also taken into consideration. The Brāhmaṇa-text even offers some alternatives in some cases. Thus a pair of twin bullocks is prescribed as the dakṣiṇā at the Ratnin-offering in the house of Samgrahītr. But if twin bullocks are not available, any two bullocks<sup>90</sup> born successively from the same mother can be offered.

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88. Ś. Br. XIV. 6, 9, 22 : śraddhāyām hyeva dakṣiṇā pratiṣṭhitā bhavatīti ..... etc.

89. yām vai rātamanā avicikitsan dakṣiṇām dadāti tayā mahaj jayati / Ś. Br. IV. 3, 4, 20.

90. Ś. Br. V. 3, 1, 8.

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Religious Condition — God

While in general the main undercurrent of theological ideas is the same in the Brāhmaṇas as in the previous Ṛgvedic age, some changes can apparently be noticed in the later period — in the Yajurveda and in the Brāhmaṇas with the dominance of the cult of sacrifice. As a result the pantheon of the Ṛ.V. underwent change to a considerable extent. Some gods attained exalted position due to their connection with sacrifice, while some gods lost their previous importance. Some of the characteristics have been changed, and new characteristics have been invented and attached to them. We can get a clear picture of this changed conception of divinity or godhead from different Brāhmaṇas. The Śātapatha Brāhmaṇa which occupies an important position among all the Brāhmaṇical works, is specially remarkable in this respect.

It is certain that the development of the Brāhmaṇical conception of divinity is something very complex and to a certain degree connected with the growth of ritualism. It has also behind it a pantheistic strain. The simple nature-worship of the early Ṛgvedic age has been replaced by the more developed process of anthropomorphism and humanization. We meet here the same gods as in the Ṛ.V. i.e., the same Agni, Indra, Soma, Śavitr, Pūṣā and so on. But their original character as natural beings has already faded into insignificance. It is, true that the process of humanization was already present in the anthropomorphic tendency which endowed

natural phenomena with personal characteristics in the R̥gveda. But it became more prominent and more clearly noticeable in the Brāhmaṇas. The Vedic seers liked to think about their deities in the light of their own psychic experience. Consequently, most of the deities became endowed with many human traits habits and qualities including defects. Though the Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa contemplate that the ways of men are in accordance with those of the gods,<sup>1</sup> as a matter of fact it is men who see the image of themselves in gods. The ways of the divinehood are but sometimes to a heightened degree to give them an appearance of superhuman importance. In the Brāhmaṇas many stories are found about gods, which also record their man-like activities.<sup>2</sup> In a word, the picture of humanization of the Vedic deities is more complete in the Brāhmaṇas than in the R̥.V.

At the same time their connection with the sacrifice has noticeably increased in the Brāhmaṇas. It is also

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1. Yathā vai devānāṃ caranāṃ tad vā nu manuṣyānāṃ /  
S. Br. III. 4, 1, 5.

2. Thus the gods are described as being related to one another among themselves just like human persons. Some of them are regarded as fathers, or mothers, and some as their children. Being the sons of the Universal father Prajāpati, gods were all equal at first. But they also like human persons struggle among themselves for superiority and sometimes approach their father for a settlement. More direct proof of the humanization of gods in the Brāhmaṇas is that here we find even caste-system among the gods. Thus some gods like Agni and Brhaspati are said to be Brahmin by caste, some like Indra and Varuṇa are mentioned as Kṣatra and some again like the Maruts are Vaiśya.

noticeable that due to tremendous importance attached to sacrifice in this age the gods have attained somewhat a subordinate position. All the power and divinity which the gods possess are, according to the Brāhmanas, due to the performance of sacrifices. Even Prajāpati, who is well-known as the progenitor of both the Gods and the Asuras, has been identified with sacrifice in the Brāhmanas. Moreover, some unimportant gods of the R.V. or gods who are mentioned less in the R.V. (like Viṣṇu or Rudra) have attained great prominence due to their special connection with the sacrifice in the Brāhmanas. On the other hand, some important gods of the earlier period have in this age, faded into oblivion. In short, the Vedic pantheon of the Saṁhitā period underwent considerable changes in this age.

Gods are born :

The first thing about the Brāhmanic godhead that strikes us most is that like all living beings the gods are also born. In the R.V. also the gods are not regarded as self-existent and are variously described as being born of Heaven and Earth. Moreover, sometimes Uṣas is spoken of as the mother of the gods,<sup>3</sup> sometimes Brahmanaspati is called their father.<sup>4</sup> But in the Brāhmanas Prajāpati has become the sole creator of living beings. Consequently, gods are

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3. R.V. I. 113, 19.

4. R.V. II. 26, 3.

said to be created by him. The Śātapatha Brāhmaṇa has several times repeated the statement that the gods have been created by Prajāpati along with other beings.<sup>5</sup> Many legendary accounts

in the Śātapatha Brāhmaṇa begins with the same formula :

"The gods and asuras (evil spirits) both sprung from Prajāpati (the father-god)."<sup>6</sup> In one passage the creation of the gods by Prajāpati has been described in the following manner:

"Desirous of off-spring Prajāpati went on singing praises and toiling. He laid the power of reproduction into his own self.

By the breath of his mouth he created the gods; the gods were created on entering the sky."<sup>7</sup> Another passage tells us that

"from the upward breathings Prajāpati created the gods".<sup>8</sup> At

VI. 1, 2, 1, we get a detailed account of how Prajāpati

created the worlds. In this connection, the creation of the

gods has been described in a different manner: "By his Mind

(manas) he entered into union with Speech (Vāk) : he became

pregnant with eight drops. They were created as those eight

Vasus. He placed them on this earth".<sup>9</sup> In like manner he

5. Ś. Br. VI. 1, 2, 1; X. 1, 3, 1; XI. 1, 6, 7, etc.

6. devāśca vā asurāśca / ubhaye prājāpatyāḥ // Ś. Br. I. 2, 4, 8; I. 2, 5, 1; II. 2, 2, 8; etc.

7. so'rcañchrāṇyamsacāra prajākāmāḥ / sa ātmanyeva prajātimadhata sa āsyenaiva devānasṛjata te devā divamabhipadyāsṛjyanta ... / Ś. Br. XI. 1, 6, 7.

8. prajāpatih prajā asṛjata / sa ūrāhvebhya eva prāṇebhyo devānasṛjata / Ś. Br. X. 1, 3, 1.

9. Śa manasā vācam mithunam sama bhavat / so'sṭau drapsān garbhya bhavat te'sṭau vasavo' sṛjyanta tānasyāmupādadhāt /

Ś. Br. VI. 1, 2, 6.



created the eleven Rudras and the twelve Ādityas and placed them in the air and in the sky respectively; he also created the All-gods whom he placed in the quarters. But Prajāpati in this Brāhmaṇa is not only a personal god; here he has sometimes been identified with Brahman (neut.). The priestly philosophers envisage in it the nature of the primordial principle of truth, and the world-order seems to be an emanation from the same : "Verily in the beginning, this universe was the Brahman (neut.). It created the gods; and having created the gods it made them ascend these worlds...<sup>10</sup>...". This concept of the Brahman assumed in the Upaniṣads philosophical implication of great significance.

#### Origin of individual gods :

Not only the origin of gods in general, but the origin of individual gods is also sometimes alluded to in the Brāhmaṇas. Thus in the passage (ŚB. VI. 1, 2, 1) already referred to we get the birth of individual gods like eight Vasus, eleven Rudras, twelve Ādityas and also the All-gods. Similarly the origin of some other gods is also described here. These descriptions sometimes point to their association with sacrificial ritual or natural phenomena. Prof. Max Muller thinks that passages in which the birth of certain gods is mentioned have a physical meaning : ~~the birth of certain gods is mentioned have a physical~~  
~~the birth of certain gods is mentioned have a physical~~

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10. brahma vā idamagra āsīt / taddevānasrjāta taddevān  
srṣṭvaishu lokeṣu vyārohayat ..... / Ś. Br. XI. 2, 3, 1.

~~meanings~~ they refer to the birth of the day, the rising of the sun, the return of the year".<sup>11</sup> Agni is sometimes described as the progenitor of the deities and he is identified with Prajāpati.<sup>12</sup> At II. 4, 1, 3 and VI. 1, 2, 26 Agni is said to be the son of Prajāpati and Prajāpati the son of Agni respectively. Agni is also the son of Heaven and Earth. Sometimes the origin of particular gods is described in a symbolic manner. Thus the creation of the three gods viz. Agni, Vāyu and Āditya is said to be out of fire-pans which stand for the three gods.<sup>13</sup> Similarly symbolic is the statement : "This which is purified is the ocean (samudra). From this ocean, all the gods, all creatures issue forth".<sup>14</sup>

#### Attainment of immortality :

As the gods were born or created, they were not at first immortal. The Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa has again and again said that the gods were originally soulless and mortal.<sup>15</sup> Sometimes it has been said of them that the span of life is longer in the case of the gods than that of men; but that

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11. Max Muller / Chips from a German Workshop, p. 38.

12. agnir vai devatānām mukhaṁ prajānayatā sa prajāpatiḥ . . . . . / S. Br. II. 5, 1, 8.

13. S. Br. VI. 5, 3, 3.

14. ayaṁ vai samudro yo'yaṁ pavate etasmādvai samudrāt sarve devāḥ sarvāṇi bhūtāni samudhravanti . . . . . / S. Br. XIV, 2, 2, 2.

15. devāsca vā asurāsca / . . . taubhaya evānātmāna āsur martyā hyāsuranātmā hi martyaḥ . . . / S. Br. II. 2, 2, 8.

does not mean that they were immortal : "From Prajāpati were the deities created : Agni, Indra, Soma, Parameṣṭhin and Prājāpatya. They were born with a life of a thousand years."<sup>16</sup> Another passage (VII. 3, 1, 10) tells us that "Longer is the life of gods and shorter the life of men."<sup>17</sup> But though the gods were originally not immortal, they attained immortality through several means. At one place, it has been narrated that in former times the gods were mortal and they attained immortality by gaining the year;<sup>18</sup> at another place, gods are said to have gained immortality by dint of Brahman.<sup>19</sup> Another story tells us that both the gods and the asuras were soulless and mortal; in their fight with the asuras the gods began to be slain by the asuras and their number decreased. In order to overcome their enemies, the gods placed the immortal Agnyādhyeya in their innermost soul, which gave them immortality.<sup>20</sup> It has also been said (IX. 5, 1, 1-8) that when immortality departed from the gods, they set themselves to recover it by religious observances.<sup>21</sup> They offered Soma

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16. prajāpateradhi devatā asṛjyantāgnirindrah somah parameṣṭhī prājāpatyah / tāh sahasrāyuso jāñjire /

S'. Br. XI. 1, 6, 14-15.

17. drāghīyo hi devāyusaṁ hrasīyo manuṣyāyusaṁ . . . /

S'. Br. VII. 3, 1, 10.

18. martyā ha vā agre devā āsuḥ / sa yadaiva te saṁvat-saramā-purathāmṛtā āsuḥ . . . . . S'. Br. XI. 1, 2, 12.

19. martyā ha vā agre devā āsuḥ / sa yadaiva te brahmaṇā purathāmṛtā āsuḥ . . . . . S'. Br. XI. 2, 3, 6.

20. S'. Br. II. 2, 2, 8-10.

21. devebhyo ha vā amṛtamāpacakrāma / te hocuḥ / śramena tapasedānānvicchāmeti . . . . . S'. Br. IX. 5, 1, 1-2.

(which is the principle of immortality) into fire and thus infused immortality into him who is again the soul of all the gods. Likewise another passage (III. 1, 4, 3) tells us that the gods attained immortality by performing sacrifices. Prajāpati himself who is the creator of gods, has been said to be partly mortal and partly immortal in the beginning : "His vital airs alone were immortal, his body mortal; but by this rite . . . he makes himself uniformly undecaying and immortal."<sup>22</sup>

#### Attainment of heaven :

Like immortality, heaven was also attained by the gods only in later times. In other words, originally the gods lived on earth and they ascended to heaven by means of the sacrifice. Thus the Śat. Br. says that 'the gods went on worshipping and toiling with the same (sacrifice), by which they had ascended to heaven.'<sup>23</sup> It has also been said there that the gods attained heaven with the help of the horse at the Aśvamedha. Elsewhere, it has been said that the gods gained heaven by worshipping with all the songs or metres<sup>24</sup> and another passage tells us that gods entered the

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22. tasya prāṇā evāṃṛtā āsuḥ śarīraṃ martyaṃ sa etena kasmanā . . . ajaramṛtamātmanamākuruta . . . / etc.

S' Br. X. 1, 4, 1.

23. sa yenaiva devā divamupodakrāman / teno' evārcantaḥ śrāmyantes' ceruḥ . . . /

S' Br. I. 7, 3, 2.

24. yātayāmāni vai devaiśchandāmsi chandobhirhi devāḥ svargaṃ lokaṃ samāśnuvata . . . /

S' Br. III. 9, 3, 10.

heaven from below.<sup>25</sup>

But heaven is not the only dwelling-place of gods; the sky, the air and the earth are also inhabited by them. The gods are said to be three-fold, consisting of those of the sky, the air and the earth.<sup>26</sup> The gods are also spoken of as residing on earth, in the air, the heavens, the regions, the stars and the waters.<sup>27</sup> The world of gods is generally thought to be distinct from the world of fathers in the Brāhmaṇas. The S. Br. thinks that there are 'seven worlds of gods',<sup>28</sup> which again are said to be consisting of the three worlds and the four quarters.<sup>29</sup>

#### Number :

Regarding the number of the gods, speculations have been made from the very beginning. Though in many hymns of the R.V.<sup>30</sup> their number has generally been estimated as

25. S. Br. IX. 6, 1, 23.

26. S. Br. VI. 1, 2, 10; VI. 5, 3, 3.

27. pṛthivī vai sarveṣāṃ devānāmāyatanaṃ . . . . .  
antarikṣaṃ vai sarveṣāṃ devānāmāyatanaṃ . . . . . dāurvai  
sarveṣāṃ devānāmāyatanaṃ . . . . . diśo vai sarveṣāṃ devā-  
nāmāyatanaṃ . . . . . āpo vai sarveṣāṃ devānāmāyatanaṃ . . . /  
S. Br. XIV. 3, 2, 4-13.

28. Sapta devalokāḥ . . . . . / S. Br. IX. 5, 2, 8.

29. caṭasro diśastraya ime lokā ete vai sapta devalokāḥ  
. . . . . / S. Br. X. 2, 4, 4.

30 ā nāsatyā tribhirekādaśairiha devebhīryātāṃ madhu-  
peyamasvinā / R.V. I. 34. 11. Also R.V. III. 6, 9; VII. 28, 1  
etc.

thirty-three, yet it remains somewhat doubtful all the same, because it is in the R.V. itself that the gods are mentioned as numerous : "Three hundred, three thousand thirty and nine gods have worshipped Agni' etc.<sup>31</sup> The Brāhmaṇas also generally accept the number of gods as thirty-three. It has been said in the Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa that "just as many gods as there were of old, so many there are now. It is also stated in the Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa that once Yājñavalkya was questioned by other learned Brāhmaṇas in the sacrificial site of Janaka regarding the number of the gods and he replied that they were three hundred and three, three thousand and three, thirty-three, three, two, one and a half, and one.<sup>33</sup> He further said that three hundred and three, and three thousand and three are really their powers, but there were indeed thirty-three gods. These thirty-three gods have been enumerated by him there as being made up of eight Vasus, eleven Rudras, twelve Ādityas together with Indra and Prajāpati.<sup>34</sup> According to another passage<sup>35</sup> the thirty-three gods consist of the same eight Vasus, eleven Rudras and twelve Ādityas with the addition of Dyaus and Prthivī who

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31. trīṇi śatā trī sahasrā nyagnim trīṃśacca devā nava cāsaparyan / R.V. III. 9, 9.

32. yāvanto hyeva sanāgre devāstāvanto devāḥ . . . / S. Br. VIII. 7, 1, 9.

33. S. Br. XI. 6, 3, 4,

34. mahimāna evaiṣāmete trayastrīṃśattveva devā iti katame te trayastrīṃśadityaṣṭau vasava ekādaśa rudrā dvādaśāṇḍityāsta ekatrīṃśadindrascaivā prajāpatīśca trayastrīṃśāviti //

S. Br. XI. 6, 3, 5.

35. aṣṭau vasavaḥ / ekādaśa rudrā dvādaśāṇḍityā ime'eva dyāvāprthivī trayastrīṃśyau . . . / S. Br. IV. 5, 7, 2.

are substituted for Indra and Prajāpati. In many passages of the Brāhmaṇa again, besides the thirty-three gods Prajāpati has been mentioned as the thirty-fourth.<sup>36</sup> But truly speaking, gods are neither thirty-three nor thirty-four in the Brāhmaṇas; or in other words this number does not include all the deities of the Vedic pantheon. For example, Agni, who is a particularly important deity from the very beginning, the Aśvins, Soma, Varuṇa or Pūṣan who are no less important in the Brāhmaṇas are excluded from the list of the thirty-three gods. Indra, the mightiest god, has been once included in the group of thirty-three deities, while in another place, he has been excluded. Thus the number of gods cannot be confined within the rigid limit of the thirty-three.<sup>The</sup> Brāhmaṇa thinks that gods are fewer than men just as men are fewer than beasts.<sup>37</sup>

The number of the gods increased in the Brāhmaṇas not only on account of the addition of new sub-division of the old ones. Even in the later R̥gvedic age, we find this tendency of the expansion of the Vedic pantheon. ~~There~~ The different epithets which were formerly used with different gods according to their special activities, later became the names of separate deities. Thus Savitr (the inspirer) which was originally an epithet of Sūrya in the early R̥gvedic times, became a separate god in the later period. Similar tendency is found in the Brāhmaṇa where one divinity

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36. trayastrīṃśad vai devāḥ / prajāpatiḥ catustrīṃśaḥ /  
S. Br. IV. 5, 7, 2; V. 1, 2, 13.

37. bhūyāṃso hi manuṣyā devebhyo'tha yadbhūya iya sṛuci  
parīśinaṣṭi bhūyāṃso hi paśavo manuṣyebhyaḥ ... / S. Br. II. 3, 2, 18.

like Agni is mentioned variously in different context according to his functions.

We have so far discussed godhead of the Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa in general outline. Now we turn to some of the characteristics attributed to the gods in the Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa. It is an well-established theory and has already been pointed out that most of the gods described in the Saṃhitās and the Brāhmaṇas are personal figures representing different aspects of natural phenomena, attributed with many anthropomorphic qualities. The personification is more developed in the Brāhmaṇas and in most cases they are far away from their natural basis. But "the sacrifice being the main object of interest, the individual traits of the gods have faded", says Macdonell.<sup>38</sup> Yet, even among the sacrificial discourses of the different Brāhmaṇas, <sup>we</sup> notice comments which give us glimpse of some of their common characteristics. But physical features of the Gods are not so distinct and prominent in the Śatapatha Brāhmaṇas as we find them in the Rgveda. Thus the Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa remarks that "the gods are immortal; the gods are bliss; the gods are glorious,"<sup>39</sup> <sup>40</sup> They have been characterised as the spirit of joy and bliss. It has been said that in the beginning the gods and men lived together, but just as they later attained immortality and

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38. A.A. Macdonell / Vedic Mythology, p. 4.

39. amṛtā devā ... śrīrdevāḥ ... yaśo devāḥ .... /  
S.Br. II. 1, 4, 9.

40. ānandātmāno haiva sarve devāḥ ... / S. Br. X. 3, 5, 13.



heaven, they became invisible.<sup>41</sup> Yet there was direct communication between the gods and the priests.<sup>42</sup> The gods are certainly more wise and more powerful than men. They have the capacity to know the intentions of a man. They eagerly wait for the offering made to them by men. The hymns of praise as well as the offerings are said to be the food of the gods. Once the gods approached Prajāpati who said to them, "The sacrifice shall be your food; immortality your sap; and the sun your light!"<sup>43</sup> In another place king Soma<sup>44</sup> has been mentioned as the food of the gods.

But the most divine quality which the gods possess is surely the quality of truth. Again and again, the Śātapatha Brāhmaṇa expressly states that the gods are the truth incarnate.<sup>45</sup> Indeed, truth is verily the one law which the gods never transgress and it is through this that their conquest, their glory, is unassailable.<sup>46</sup> Thus the gods have established themselves by truth and the way of the gods means nothing but the way of truth. Not only truth but true knowledge also belongs only to the gods.<sup>47</sup>

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41. parokṣaṁ vai devāḥ /

Ś. Br. III. 1, 3, 25.

42. Ś. Br. I. 7, 3, 6.

43. Ś. Br. II. 4, 2, 1.

44. Somo rājā devānāmanam .... / Ś. Br. II. 4, 2, 7.

45. Satyameva devāḥ / Ś. Br. I. 1, 1, 4; also  
I. 1, 2, 17; III. 3, 2, 2.

46. ekaṁ ha vai devā vrataṁ caranti satyameva tasmādesaṁ  
jītanāpajayyaṁ tasmā yasaḥ . . . / Ś. Br. III. 4, 2, 8.

47. Śa haiṣaiva devānāmaddhā vedyā ... etc. Ś. Br. X. 3, 5, 13.  
Here Sāyana - eṣa upaniṣat addhā aparokṣavidyā ..... etc.

Moreover, the gods were at first all alike. The Brāhmaṇa states that being created by the Father-god Prajāpati, the gods and the Asuras were equally mortal and soulless.<sup>48</sup> Later the gods obtained superiority to the Asuras by practising austerities and performing the sacrifice. Among themselves again the three — Agni, Indra and Sūrya desired to be superior, and they became superior by drawing Atigrāhyas for themselves.<sup>49</sup> Of the three again, Indra evidently became the most prominent, and it has been repeatedly said in the Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa that Indra is all<sup>50</sup> the deities, the gods have Indra for their chief.

Lastly, the gods have the quality of brightness and this is evident from the etymology of their very name (i.e. deva <  $\sqrt{\text{div}}$  ('to shine')). In the Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa an attempt has been made to suggest twofold etymology of the term 'deva' from div (sky) and divā (day light).<sup>51</sup> Sometimes again, the gods are identified with the rays of the sun in the Brāhmaṇa (Ś. Br. II. 3, 1, 7).

48. Ś. Br. II. 2, 2, 8.

49. trayo' kāmāyantātisthāvānaḥ syāntityagnirindrah  
sūryaḥ / te'rcantaḥ śrāmyantaśceraḥ / ta etānatigrāhyā  
dadṛśus-tānatyagrṇata . . . . te'tisthāvāno'bhavan .... /  
Ś. Br. IV. 5, 4, 1-2.

50. atha yadindre sarve devāstasthānāḥ / tasmādāhurindrah  
sarvā devatā indra-śreṣṭhā devā ityetaddha vai devāstredhaika-  
devatyā abhavan ... / Ś. Br. I. 6, 3, 22. Also III. 4, 2, 1;  
IX. 2, 3, 3-4 etc.

51. taddevānām devatvaṁ yaddivamabhipadyā srjyanta tasmai  
sasrjānāya divevāsa tadveva devānām devatvaṁ yadasmai sasrjā-  
nāya divevāsa / Ś. Br. XI. 1, 6, 7.

Relation of gods with men :

It has been already said that the gods in the Brāhmanas are mostly like human beings and that they originally had human characteristics. But some legends ~~attest~~ attest to their super-human qualities as well. The Brāhmaṇa contains a lot of information which throws light upon the relation of gods with men. It is told in a legend that at first there was direct relation between gods and men : "In the beginning both the gods and men were together here. And whatever did not belong to the men, for that they importuned the gods, saying, 'This is not ours; let it be ours !' Being indignant at this importunity, the gods then disappeared."<sup>52</sup> At another place the disappearance of gods from the sight of men has been stated in the following language : 'Verily both the gods and men and the Fathers drink together, and this is their symposium; of old they drank together visibly, but now they do so unseen.'<sup>53</sup> But even then there is always a connection between gods and men. In the S'. Br. the gods have been said to know the minds of men. "They are aware that he (sacrificer) contemplates the performance of this

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52. ubhaye ha vā idamagre sahāsurdevās'ca manuṣyās'ca tadyaaddha sma manuṣyānām na bhavati taddha sma devānyācanta idaṁ vai no nāstīdaṁ no' stviti te tasyā eva yācñgāyai dveṣeṇa devāstirobhūtā . . . / S'. Br. II. 3, 4, 4.

53. . . . te ha smaita ubhaye devamanuṣyāḥ pitarah sampibante saīṣā sampā te ha sma drśyamānā eva purā sampibanta utaitarhyadrśyamānā / S'. Br. III. 6, 2, 26.

rite, and will make his offering in the morning; and consequently they all come to his house and abide there."<sup>54</sup> Not only that, there was a sort of inter-dependence between men and gods. Even the all-powerful gods depended upon the sacrificial offerings for their subsistence — pradānāddhi<sup>55</sup> devāḥ upajīvanti.

Some remarks are found in the Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa which attempt to describe the gods as contrasted with men. Thus in one place<sup>56</sup> it has been said that the gods have come first and then men, and in another place the gods are said to have a longer life than men.<sup>57</sup> Āhavanīya is said to be the world of the gods while Gārhapatya is that of men,<sup>58</sup> east is the region of gods, while north the region of men. But the notable feature which distinguishes them from men is that gods abide with the law of truth while<sup>59</sup> men indulge in untruth.

#### Gods and Asuras :

The relation between the Gods and the Asuras also

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54. mano ha vai devā manuṣyā<sup>-sya-</sup> jñānanti ta'enametaḍvratamupayantantaṁ viduḥ prātarno yakṣyata iti te'sya viśve devā grhānāgacchanti te'sya grheṣū pavasanti.. / S'.Br. I. 1, 1, 7.

55. S'. Br. I. 2, 5, 24.

56. S'. Br. IV. 6, 4, 6.

57. drāghīyo hi devāyusaṁ hrasīyo manuṣyāyusaṁ . . . / S'. Br. VII. 3, 1, 10.

58. S'. Br. VII. 3, 1, 10.

59. S'. Br. I. 1, 1, 4.

offers an interesting study as an aspect of the Brāhmaṇas. It is peculiar that throughout the R̥gveda (except only in four cases) the word 'asura' is used in the sense of 'a great or supreme god'. But during the Brāhmanic period 'Asura' has attained a totally changed connotation and has the singular importance as the enemy of the gods. Their origin is, however, the same as that of the gods — their father being Prajāpati. Many legends in the Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa refers to this — "The gods and the asuras, both of them sprung from Prajāpati, . . . " <sup>60</sup> etc. But though in their origin, there was no difference, they entered on the inheritance of their Father differently, and thus attained different characters. Thus in one of the numerous tales about the gods and the asuras, it has been said that both of them, being sons of the Father-god, inherited from him, but the gods came in for the Mind and the asuras for the Speech. Thereby the gods came in for the sacrifice and the asuras for speech; the gods for yonder heaven and asuras for this earth. <sup>61</sup> Again, they entered on the inheritance of their Father in the aspect of growth of time or decline in time respectively. <sup>62</sup>

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60. S. Br. I. 2, 48; II. 2, 2, 8; and so on.

61. devāśca vā asurāścobhaye prājāpatyāḥ prajāpateḥ pitur dāyamupeyurmana eva devā upāyan vācamasurā yaḥnameva taddevā upāyan vācamasurā amūmeva devā upāyannimāmasurāḥ /  
S. Br. III. 2, 1, 18.

62. devāśca vā asurāśca / . . . . prajāpateḥ piturdāyam upeyu retāvevār dhāmasau ya evāpuryatetaṁ devā upāyan yo 'pakṣīyate tamasurāḥ / S. Br. I. 7, 2, 22.

Even Prajāpati, the Father-god, made distinction between the gods and the asuras regarding their share. The Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa tells that by the breath of his mouth Prajāpati created the gods on entering the sky and after their creation, there was, as it were, daylight for him. And by the downward breathing, he created the asuras on entering this earth. On creating them, there was, as it were, darkness for him. Hence the day belongs to the gods and the night to the asuras. Another statement<sup>63</sup> also gives the same account that darkness and illusion were given to the asuras as their portion by the Father-god. Thus the gods may be said to be the spirits of light, while the asuras, the spirits of darkness. Their further contrary nature is indicated in the story,<sup>64</sup> which tells us, how the gods became truthful and the asuras untruthful. Moreover, the association of the asuras with the Rakṣasas and Piśācas, who were hostile to the gods, made the asuras, enemies to the gods. They became full of guile and took to magic art as their Veda<sup>65</sup> i.e. the object of learning.

On the whole, the asuras in the Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa are described as having established themselves as the permanent enemies of the gods. They maintain this character of antagonism in the later tradition of the Purāṇas etc. In

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63. Ś. Br. II. 4, 2, 5.

64. Ś. Br. IX. 5, 1, 12-16.

65. kusīdina upasametā bhavanti tānupadiśati māyā vedah so'yamiti kāmcih māyām kuryāt . . . / Ś. Br. XIII. 4, 3, 11.

the Brāhmaṇa they are said to have repeatedly entered into contest with the gods for the possession of this world or right to sacrifice. But ultimately they were defeated and the gods maintained their superiority over them.<sup>66</sup> Asuras in their attempt for sacrifices are said to make offerings quite arrogently to their own mouths. Thus they lost to attain the merit<sup>67</sup> of sacrifice.

#### Gods and the Sacrifice :

But the most important thing that concerns Brāhmaṇic godhead is the position of the gods in relation to the sacrifice. It is an undeniable fact that the Brāhmaṇic age is specially the age of the sacrifices. Sacrifice was held to be the greatest of the great deeds.<sup>68</sup> It was the only means of attaining both the worldly gain and the heavenly bliss.

Sacrifice at first seems to have originated as a means of propitiation of the gods. In that stage of pre-<sup>period,</sup> Brāhmaṇa, ~~and~~ the gods were held in a highly exalted position, and sacrifice was a means to seek the favour of the gods. In the Brāhmaṇa period sacrifice itself ~~was~~ assumed tremendous importance. In the Śātapatha Brāhmaṇa we find that the gods

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66. devās'ca vā asurās'ca / ubhaye prājāpatyāḥ pasprdhire te ha sma yaḥ devā asurān jayati . . . etc. S'. Br. I. 2, 4, 8.

67. S'. Br. IX. 1, 8, 1.

68. yajño vai śreṣṭhatamaṁ karma / S'. Br. I. 7, 1, 5.  
also KB, XXV. 11 — yajño vai bhuvaneṣu śreṣṭhaḥ /

themselves have become the performers of the sacrifice.<sup>69</sup>  
 Prajāpati, the Father-god in the Brāhmaṇas has been identified with the sacrifice itself.<sup>70</sup> The attainment of that supreme prominence which the gods now occupy was due to the performance of the sacrifice.<sup>71</sup> The Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa further says that the gods became immortal through sacrifices;<sup>72</sup> also by means of the sacrifice, they ascended to heaven.<sup>73</sup> A story in the Brāhmaṇa tells us how the gods, while contending for superiority, overcame the Asuras by means of the sacrifice.<sup>74</sup> Thus sacrifice became in the Brāhmaṇas a powerful means to attain the desired godhead on the part of the gods. 'Desiring glory and success, they sat to perform a satra' says the Brāhmaṇa.<sup>75</sup>

This conception of the dependence of the gods on sacrifices naturally made sacrifice the secret of the highest power that one can aspire for. Accordingly, much importance was laid on the correct performance of the sacrifice in all its details. It tended to be a sort of result-producing machine which had to be operated with utmost care and caution.

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69. S. Br. XI. 5, 5, 12.

70. eṣa vai pratyakṣaṁ yajño yat prajāpatiḥ S. Br. IV. 3. 4. 31 also III. 2, 2, 4; V. 2, 1, 4. etc.

71. S. Br. III. 1, 4, 3.

72. S. Br. X. 4, 3, 3-4.

73. S. Br. I. 7, 3, 1.

74. S. Br. II. 4, 3, 2-3.

75. S. Br. XIV. 1, 1, 3.



It was assumed that if everything was done correctly in a sacrifice, the sacrificer will surely attain its due result. This importance of sacrifice made the position of gods subordinate. In such atmosphere of ritualistic predominance, lore of sacrifice involved much of scholasticism. Priests as a class became the master of the said lore and accordingly their position in society became highly esteemed. The famous German scholar Oldenberg says<sup>76</sup> that the result is obtained from the sacrifice in a cause-effect relation and not as a mercy of God. Prof. Keith has also observed in the same strain: "In the theosophy of the Brāhmaṇas, it is an accepted fact that the sacrifice has a magic power of its own and it brings about the effect at which it aims with absolute independence".<sup>77</sup> Such observations of great scholars are not without some truth, but they do not seem to represent the whole truth. For the Brāhmaṇa-texts themselves, specially the Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa, hold the opinion that it is the gods who give the result of the sacrifice to the performer. Thus in the Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa we find that at the end of the Darsā and Pūṇamāsa-offerings, a prayer is made to the gods for granting the desired object.<sup>78</sup> More interesting is the discussion about the question whether one should approach the gods with such prayers. It has been set forth as a prima-facie view that the approach to gods with prayers may

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76. H. Oldenberg / Waltanschau, p. 155.

77. A.B. Keith / The Religion and Philosophy of the Veda and Upaniṣads, p. 260.

78. S. Br. I. 9, 1, 12.

annoy them and so there should not be any prayer in a sacrifice.<sup>79</sup> But it is finally settled that the sacrificer should approach them with a prayer, for, "he alone that asks finds a giver; and the master, moreover, knows nothing of his dependence. But when the latter says, 'I am thy dependent; support me !' then he does know him, and feels himself bound to support him."<sup>80</sup>

Besides, inspite of emphasis on the great potency of the 'sacrifice' in this period the 'prayer for blessing' reveals the yearning of the sacrificer's heart to attain the grace of the god. Thus it is said:<sup>81</sup> " . . . the sacrifice belongs to the Gods and the prayer for blessing belongs to the sacrificer. . . . and what he does in approaching, that indeed is the sacrificer's prayer for blessing." The same idea is expressed in other Brāhmaṇas also.<sup>82</sup> Thus without affecting the importance of the sacrifice in its efficacy for the desired result, it was also conceived as a means for securing the favour of the gods towards the attainment of the result of the act.

With this general observation on the characteristics of the gods, let us now discuss some distinctive traits of the gods like Prajāpati, Indra, Varuṇa, Agni, etc. in the

79. Ś. Br. II. 3, 4, 3.

80. Ś. Br. II. 3, 4, 7.

81. Ś. Br. II. 3, 4, 5.

82. For example, the Jaiminiya Brāhmaṇa says that the gods being pleased to grant the sacrificer offspring, cattle and food. J. B. I. 233.

light of the facts noticed in the Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa. Among them Prajāpati occupies an important position in the whole Brāhmaṇic pantheon.

Prajāpati : Though in the R.V. Prajāpati has been mentioned only once, in the Brāhmaṇas, however, he is the great god — the universal generator of all beings. In the whole Brāhmaṇical cosmology, Prajāpati is the first cause of creation; from him starts the evolution.<sup>83</sup> Anthropomorphically, he is the Father of both the gods and the Asuras.<sup>84</sup> In a word, Prajāpati has become synonymous with 'productiveness'.<sup>85</sup> The whole world of living beings emerges from Prajāpati who is called Visvakarma or the 'Great Creator'. About Prajāpati's own origin, the Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa has said that in the beginning there existed nothing but water on which floated a golden egg; in a year's time Prajāpati as a person was produced therefrom.<sup>86</sup> Elsewhere it has been stated that in the beginning Prajāpati was alone and that he desired to exist by generating creatures.<sup>87</sup> This refers to Prajāpati as a self-existent (Svayambhū) Being. He is related to both the gods and the asuras, whom he created.

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83. Ś. Br. II. 2, 4, 1; VII. 5, 2, 6; XI. 5, 8, 1, etc.

84. devās'ca vā asurās'ca / ubhaye prājāpatyā / Ś. Br. I. 2, 4, 8; IV. 2, 4, 11; V. 1, 1, 2; XI. 1, 8, 1.

85. prajānām prajāpatiḥ / Ś. Br. V. 1, 3, 10.

86. Ś. Br. XI. 1, 6, 1.

87. Ś. Br. XI. 5, 8, 1.

Thus Agni is said to have been created by Prajāpati from his mouth.<sup>88</sup> But not only Prajāpati is Agni's father, he is also his son.<sup>89</sup> Uṣas is his daughter but again he is said to be her husband.<sup>90</sup> Prajāpati is further occasionally identified with several individual gods like Agni,<sup>91</sup> Vāyu,<sup>92</sup> Savitr,<sup>93</sup> Candramā,<sup>94</sup> Vācaspati,<sup>95</sup> Vāk<sup>96</sup> and also with Death.<sup>97</sup> His identification with the highest light in the Sky (Sun)<sup>98</sup> surely refers to the exalted position and supreme greatness of Prajāpati.

Thus Prajāpati's greatness is well-established in the Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa. He, the 'parameṣṭhin' (supreme), indeed, is the lord of all beings. Being the source of the gods<sup>99</sup> Prajāpati has verily become the most heroic among them. He has again and again been said to be above the thirty-three

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88. S'. Br. II. 2, 4, 1.

89. S'. Br. VI. 1, 2, 27.

90. S'. Br. I. 7, 4, 1 ff

91. S'. Br. II. 3, 3, 18.

92. S'. Br. VIII. 3, 4, 15.

93. S'. Br. II. 5, 1, 10.

94. S'. Br. VI. 2, 2, 16.

95. S'. Br. V. 1, 1, 14.

96. S'. Br. V. 1, 5, 6.

97. S'. Br. V. 1, 3, 13.

98. S'. Br. I. 9, 3, 10.

99. prajāpatir vai devānāṃ vīryavattamah / S'. Br. XIII. 1, 2, 5.

gods; he is the thirty-fourth.<sup>100</sup> Just as Prajāpati is above the gods, so also he is over and above the three worlds; he is said to have the fourth world above them.<sup>101</sup>

Prajāpati's connection with sacrifice is distinctly intimate in the Brāhmaṇa-texts. Very often he has been identified with the sacrifice itself.<sup>102</sup> He is the creator of the sacrifice. In a legend it has been said that Prajāpati gave himself up to the gods and then created sacrifice as a counterpart of himself.<sup>103</sup> The inherent greatness of Prajāpati was thus transmitted to the sacrifice and the priests too shared its glory.

The last, but not ~~the~~ at all of the least ~~the~~ importance, is that Prajāpati combines in him both the finite and the infinite aspect of Reality. He is both determined (nirukta) and undetermined (anirukta) and limited (parimita) and unlimited (aparimita).<sup>104</sup> expression 'Ka' with which Prajāpati has been sometimes identified, denotes his inscrutable character. The word 'Ka', originally an indefinite pronoun,

100. trayas trimsāḍ vai devāḥ / prajāpatīś catus trimsās tadenaṁ prajāpatim karoti ... etc. / S'.Br. IV. 5, 7, 2; V. 1, 2, 3.

101. prajāpatir vā atīmanllokaṁś caturathastat prajāpatim eva caturthyāpnōti / S'. Br. IV. 6, 1, 4.

102. eṣa vai pratyakṣaṁ yajño yat prajāpatiḥ / S'.Br. IV. 3, 4, 3; prajāpatir yajñah / S'. Br. III. 2, 2, 4; V. 2, 1, 4; V. 1, 2, 15.

103. S'. Br. XI. 1, 8, 3.

104. S'. Br. XIV. 1, 2, 18.

was first used in the Hiranyagarbha hymn (R.V. X. 121)<sup>105</sup> and later it became a synonym of Prajāpati in the Vājasaneyī Saṁhitā (XII.4)<sup>106</sup> and in the Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa.<sup>107</sup> Prajāpati is also called Citpati, ~~śānta~~ or ātmā (IV. 6, 1, 1). These two terms also refers to his abstract nature. Here we notice a near approach to the ultimate Reality, later known as Brahman in the Upaniṣads. In the later portion of the Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa, he is even identified with Brahman. That he is also endowed with name and form seems to represent the germ of the immanent character of the Ultimate Reality as well.

Thus we may deduce conclusion that the concept of Prajāpati as indicated in the Brāhmaṇa literature gives rise to the two-fold notions of Reality — one standing as the basis of the primeval Father, Dakṣa-prajāpati, or Brahmā of the later Purāṇic mythology and the other, Absolute Reality designated as Brahman, in the Philosophy of the Upaniṣads.

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105. kasmai devāya haviṣā vidhema.

106. In this context, commentator Mahīdhara has identified Prajāpati with Hiranyagarbha : hiraṇye hiraṇya-puruṣa-rūpe brahmāṇḍe garbhābhūtasya prāṇijātasya agre samavaritṭata.

107. prajāpatir vai kasmai haviṣā vidhema /

S'.Br. VIII. 4, 1, 19.

Agni :

As in the R̥gveda, so in the Brāhmanas, Agni holds a very lofty position. As the centre of Vedic rituals, Agni was indispensable to the Vedic sacrificers who have attributed a special kind of grandeur to Agni's character. He is not 'Agni', but he is 'Agri', the foremost; in the system of creation, he was created foremost (agram) of all and therefore he has been mystically called Agni in the Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa (II. 2, 4, 2; VI. 1, 1, 11). Prajāpati, the universal creator in the Brāhmanas, is the creator of Agni. The Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa states that when Prajāpati began the work of creation, he generated Agni from his mouth (II. 2, 4, 1). But Agni is not only the son of Prajāpati, he is also his father. When Prajāpati became relaxed after producing creatures, the vital air went out from within him. Agni restored him his vital air and became his father (VI. 1, 2, 26). He is even identified with Prajāpati in the Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa and has been described as the progenitor of the deities (agnir vaideva-tānām mukham prajanayitā sa prajāpatih — II. 5, 1, 8). Elsewhere, his identification with all the deities (agnirvai sarvā devāh — I. 6, 2, 8) brings out his universal character. The Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa has also tried to point out the reason why Agni should be identified with all the deities : "They sacrifice in Agni (the fire) to all the gods; and for this reason, they say that Agni is all the

deities" (agnau sarvebhyo devebhyo juhvati tasmadahuragnih sarvā devatā iti — I. 6, 3, 20).

Agni's multifarious relation to the gods as described in the Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa is interesting. He is nearest to the gods (agnir vai devānām nediṣṭham — I. 6, 2, 9). Since the Rgvedic times he is primarily the mouth of the gods. In the Brāhmaṇas he is also said to be the head of the deities or their eyes. He is the right arm of Prajāpati or the vital air of the gods (X. 1, 4, 12). Along with Indra and Viṣṇu Agni has become the leader of the gods in the Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa. Agni alone of all the gods is very intimately connected with men both as son and as father. When he is produced by man in this world he is the son of man. When again, after physical death man is placed on the funeral fire he is often thought to be reproduced from out of the fire. Thus in the yonder world Agni becomes man's father (II. 3, 3, 2-5).

Among the activities of Agni, two main activities viz. that of a Hotṛ-priest and that of a messenger have been recorded in the Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa. (uḥhayaṁ vā etadagnir devānām hotā ca dūtasca — I. 4, 5, 4). The gods themselves appointed Agni as their Hotṛ-priest (etaddha vai devā agnim garisṭhe ayuñjan / yad dhotṛtve — I. 4, 2, 1). Agni is the messenger of the gods, since he conveys the sacrifice to the gods just like a horse or a cart (I. 4, 1, 30; I. 4, 2, 11). The special trait in Agni's character is that he is the repeller



of all evils (agnir vai pāpmano'pahantā — II. 3, 3, 13). He burns up the evil enemies of the gods (agnir vai jyotī rakṣoḥa — VII. 4, 1, 34; also I. 6, 1, 11-15). He assisted Indra to smite the rakṣasas.

In the Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa Agni is not only an individual deity with several particular characteristics. Just as he has been mentioned there as representing all the deities, similarly, he is said to have various forms. At one place in the Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa (VI. 1, 3, 10ff.) he is said to have nine names, viz. Rudra, Śarva, Paśupati, Ugra, Aśani, Bhava, Mahān Devaḥ, Isāna and Kumāra (Some of these names are also repeated in I. 7, 3, 8). These names are significant in the sense that in later mythology all these names have become the name of god Śiva. Besides these names, Agni in the Brāhmaṇa is associated with different epithets which suggest Agni's different aspects. Thus the epithet Havyavāhana (esa hi havyavāhano yadagnih — I. 4, 1, 39) may indicate that Agni is the carrier of oblations to the gods, while the epithet Kavyavāhana is applied to him when he carries the oblations to the manes (pitṛs). The epithet Bharata is used with a two-fold significance viz. bearer of oblations and supporter of all creatures. The names like Vṛta<sup>a</sup>-pati, Grhapati, Dharmanaspati are simply self-explanatory.

Agni's cardinal importance is specially brought out in the section on Agnicayana where he has been identified with Prajāpati (the Lord of Creation), Sacrifice (the work of Creation) and this Universe (the object of Creation).

Indra

Next we turn to Indra who is undoubtedly the most adored god of the Vedic pantheon. In the Rgvedic collection the largest number of hymns are addressed to Indra. In the Brāhmaṇas also he is similarly held high. His name is evidently Indo-Iranian,<sup>115</sup> but the name is too opaque to reveal any phenomenon of nature.

As in the R.V. so in the Brāhmaṇas, Indra appears with clear anthropomorphic traits. In both the spheres, he is in the main the god of strength and prowess. In the Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa Indra is said to be 'bala' ('strength')<sup>116</sup> and is Kṣatra (vigour)<sup>117</sup> personified. He is said to have been created out of Prajāpati with a life of a thousand years.<sup>118</sup> Among the gods, Indra is a Kṣatriya and his heroic characteristics befitting those of the warrior are emphasized in the Brāhmaṇa equally. He seizes upon the strength and fury of his enemies, the asuras.<sup>119</sup> His greatest feat is his combat with Vṛtra. But the old legend of Indra's encounter with Vṛtra and the latter's final defeat in the hand of Indra has, however,

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115. According to Prof. Macdonell he is "primarily the thunder-god, the conquest of the demons of drought or darkness and the consequent liberation of the waters or the winning of light forming his mythological essence. Secondly Indra is the god of battle, who aids the victorious Aryan in the conquest of the aboriginal inhabitants of India." - Vedic Mythology, p. 54.

116. S. Br. XII. 3, 3, 6.

117. S. Br. X. 2, 7, 5.

118. S. Br. XI. 1, 6, 14-15

119. S. Br. V. 5, 3, 4.

gone through a considerable alteration in the Brāhmaṇas. Vṛtra<sup>120</sup> in the later period is no more the cloud nor darkness. He has, according to the Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa, acquired two-fold nature — one Soma-like and the other demon-like. It is also stated that at his own request Indra did not kill him, but merely cut him into two such elements. Indra is also<sup>121</sup> said to have slain another demon named Namuci with foam.

Indra is already the chief god in the R.V. but in the Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa his lordship over the gods (which he enjoys in the post-vedic age) is well-established. Thus he is said to be 'jyestha' the oldest, and people should offer to him tributes in honour of his lordship.<sup>122</sup> In another passage he is hailed as the chief of the gods : " . . . . they say that Indra is all the deities, that the gods have Indra for their chief (śreṣṭha)."<sup>123</sup> Indra is said to be "the vasu of the gods, for he is their hero".<sup>124</sup> Sometimes Indra together with Agni and Soma forms a triad and these three are held<sup>125</sup> equally prominent in the Brāhmaṇa. Besides in the Brāhmaṇa

120. tam dvedhānvabhinattasya yat saumyaṁ nyaktamāsa tam candra-masam cakārātha yadasyāsuryamāsa tenemāḥ prajā udarenā vidhyattasmādā hurvṛtra eva ... etc. - Ś.Br., I. 6, 3, 17.

121. Ś. Br. XII. 7, 3, 1-3.

122. Ś. Br. V. 1, 1, 11; V. 3, 3, 6; V. 3, 3, 11.

123. tasmādā hurindrah sarvā devatā indrasreṣṭhā devā iti .../ Ś. Br. I. 6, 3, 22.

124. Ś. Br. I. 6, 4, 2.

125. Ś. Br. I. 6, 3, 20-2.

Indra has been variously identified with Agni, Sūrya, Āditya and Vāyu. This evidently proves the pantheistic conception of the divinity of Indra. But at the same time, it is also significant that the dominance of the cult of sacrifice in the Brāhmaṇa has to some extent affected the paramount importance of Indra. The valourous achievements of Indra have been sought here to be the result of sacrifices that he performed. Thus we are told that he won everything through Vājapeya.<sup>126</sup> Even his greatest achievement viz. the killing of Vṛtra has been differently explained in the Brāhmaṇa<sup>127</sup> — he did not do by the powers of his own, on the other hand, he did it through sacrifices. The prominence of sacrifice in this age has made Indra the deity of sacrifices.<sup>128</sup> He is closely connected with several oblations and some particular rituals. The deterioration of his character, which we sometimes notice in the postvedic literature is occasionally hinted at in the Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa through its legends. Thus Indra killed Visvarūpa, the son of Tvastṛ, being thereupon excluded from his share of Soma by the latter. At Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa VII. 7, 1, it is said how Indra had to suffer for having drunk Soma by theft. At Ś.Br. VII. 4, 1, 39 we are told that Indra carried off Prajāpati's vigour to the north. The references to his assuming different forms in disguise to achieve his ends also degrade his position to some degree.

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126. Ś. Br. II. 5, 3, 1; II. 5, 4, 1-9.

127. Ś. Br. I. 6, 3, 15.

128. indro vai yajñasya devatā / Ś. Br. I. 4, 5, 4.

Varuna

Besides Agni and Indra, Varuna is also a god of equal prominence in the Vedic pantheon. Like Indra, his physical basis is also difficult to ascertain. He too has equally an advanced anthropomorphic character. It has been attempted to celebrate him as a sky-god from the image of his Greek parallel Ouranos, but Vedic Varuna is evidently of more significance and importance than a mere sky-god. The term 'Asura', which is particularly an epithet applied to Varuna in the Rgveda, makes it possible to take Varuna as a parallel to Ahura Mazda in the Avesta, both being the supreme ruler of the physical and moral order of the universe.

In the R.V. Varuna's supremacy is well-established; he is frequently called Samrāj (emperor).<sup>129</sup> The Brāhmaṇas also maintain Varuna's sovereignty in general. The Śat. Brāhmaṇa says that Varuna is the supreme kṣatra.<sup>130</sup> He took away Śrī's universal sovereignty.<sup>131</sup> The Rājasūya sacrifice, which makes a king sovereign, belongs to Varuna.<sup>132</sup> The horse which is the symbol of sovereignty is to be slaughtered for Varuna.<sup>133</sup> At

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129. tā samrājā ghṛtāsutī yajñeyajña upastutā / R.V. I. 136,1.

also — āsīdūt visva bhuvanāni samrāj

visvet tāni varunasya vratāni / R.V. VIII. 42, 1.

130. Ś. Br. II. 5, 2, 34.

131. Ś. Br. XI. 6, 1, 13.

132. Ś. Br. V. 4, 3, 1.

133. Ś. Br. VI. 2, 1, 5.

the same time, Varuna, from the very beginning, is said to be the great moral governor of the universe and the preserver of *rta*. His omniscient character which is prominent even in the *Rgveda* remains unchanged in the *Brāhmaṇas* also. Thus the *Sat. Brāhmaṇa* tells us that Varuna, conceived as the lord of the universe, is seated in the midst of heaven, from which he surveys the places of punishment situated all around him.<sup>134</sup> It is peculiar that the word *spāśa* connected with Varuna, which originally meant spies<sup>135</sup> and suggested Varuna's all-seeing power, underwent a total change of meaning in the later *Brāhmaṇic* period. There it is found not in the sense of 'spies' but in the sense of noose (*pāśa*). Thus the *Sat. Brāhmaṇa* mentions Varuna's noose together with a rope and that is the rope of sacred order which does not injure.<sup>136</sup> But his nature appears to be more wrathful in the *Brāhmaṇas* than that in the *Rgveda*. The offering made at the *Varunapraghāsa* sacrifice is supposed as a means for getting relief from 'Varunamenī' i.e. Varuna's wrath or vengeance.

Varuna is often referred to conjointly with *Mitra* both in the *Rgveda* and in the *Brāhmaṇas*. In the later Vedic period, when Varuna becomes specially associated with the nocturnal heaven, *Mitra* is connected with day-time. The

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134. *S. Br.* XI. 6, 1

135. Cf. *R. V.* I. 24, 13; VII. 87, 3 etc.

136. *Varuṇyā vā eṣā rajju staḍenametaḍṛtasyaiva pāśe pratimuñcati tatho hainameṣā varuṇyā rajjurna hinasti / S. Br.* III. 7, 3, 1.

Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa however, describes Mitra as the human world, while Varuṇa is the celestial world.<sup>137</sup> Elsewhere Varuṇa is considered as out-breathing, while Mitra is in-breathing.<sup>138</sup> Their close relationship has been brought out in the Brāhmaṇa thus — Mitra and Varuṇa are respectively intelligence and will; priesthood and nobility; and while the former may stand without the latter, the latter cannot exist without the former. But surely they become perfect only when they co-operate and hence originate the graha to Mitra and Varuṇa.

Though the anthropomorphism regarding Varuṇa developed more on the moral side than on his physical traits, yet it is interesting that in a passage in the Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa we find a fine physical description of Varuṇa. The passage runs thus — "With 'to jumbaka Hail' he offers at the purificatory bath, the last oblation; for Jumbaka is Varuṇa. He offers it on the head of a white-spotted, bald-headed man with protruding teeth and reddish brown eyes; for that is Varuṇa's form." (XIII. 2, 11, 5).

In the Brāhmaṇas Varuṇa generally occupies a good position, still he appears to be gradually overshadowed by Indra on the one hand, who is becoming the chief god of sacrifice and by Prajāpati on the other, who being Himself identified with Sacrifice acquires the position of eminence and power. The Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa<sup>139</sup> narrates a legend that

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137. Ś. Br. X. 9, 2, 12.

138. Varuṇasyādhipatyamiti prāṇo vai mitro'pāno ... / Ś. Br.

VIII. 4, 2, 6.

139. Ś. Br. V. 4, 5, 1f.

Varuṇa, when he was consecrated lost his lustre or vigour and it was only through Viṣṇu at last that he could recover it. In another passage, Varuṇa Āditya is mentioned as king of the Gandharvas having Atharva as their Veda.<sup>140</sup> This connection of Varuṇa with the Atharvaveda may very well show his connection more with magical rites than with sacrifice and perhaps this explains the epithet 'māyin' applied to him.

### Soma

In the Vedic pantheon Soma appears in a double role. He is on one side the plant, the pressed juice of which is offered as the sacrificial food to the gods; on the other hand, he is an important deity who is repeatedly identified with the moon. In the R̥gveda also, Soma is an important deity and this is perhaps due to the special extension and importance of the Soma ritual in Vedic sacerdotalism. But in the R̥.V. Soma is less anthropomorphic than the other important Gods like Indra or Agni or Varuṇa. His nature as a plant is more prominent there and hence the image of the God Soma in the R̥gveda is more or less colourless.

In the Brāhmanas, however, Soma has attained more importance and this is evident from the various attributes showered on him. Thus he is said to be the kṣatra,<sup>141</sup> the

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140. S. Br. XIII. 4, 3, 7.

141. S. Br. III. 4, 1, 10; IX. 3, 3, 7.



seed<sup>142</sup> and also the vanaspati.<sup>132</sup> He is also often called a king,<sup>144</sup> a king of rivers and of plants, a king of gods and mortals. He grants immortality to the gods and hence Soma is called amṛta or divaḥ pīyūṣa. His constant association with Indra led to his sharing some epithets in common with Indra. Thus, as a god, Soma is a great warrior, unconquered in battle and he slays Vṛtra ('vrtrahā'). He is once identified with Vṛtra himself<sup>145</sup> who is again identified with the moon.<sup>146</sup> Like Agni, he scares away the demons and gets the epithet 'rakṣohā'. He is even identified with Varuṇa when he is described as ṛtavān. He is further identified with Prajāpati and then with sacrifice, since Prajāpati as sacrifice himself.

But the most noteworthy identification of Soma is that with the moon. In early Vedic literature we notice only the tendency towards the identification of Soma with the moon. But in the Brāhmaṇas we get clear identification — esah<sup>147</sup> vai somo rājā devānām annāni yat candramā.

Soma's association with other gods and his various activities also show that Soma had become an important deity

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142. S'. Br. II. 5, 1, 9.

143. S'. Br. III. 8, 3, 33.

144. rājā vai somah / S'. Br. XIV. 1, 3, 12.

145. vrthro vai somo āsīt / S'. Br. III. 4, 3, 13; IV, 2, 5, 15.

146. S'. Br. I. 6, 3, 17.

147. S'. Br. I. 6, 4, 5; I, 6, 4, 15.

in the Brāhmanas. Thus Soma assists Varuna and is described as being associated with the Rudras and the Maruts. He is also said to have taken away Śrī's royal power and thereby gained the Mitravindā oblation. He is further connected with Agni and Viṣṇu with whom he is said to form the thunderbolt. But the most intimate connection of Soma is surely with Indra. A legend in the Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa states that Indra's predisposition for Soma went so far that when Tvaṣṭṛ, knowing his son's murder by Indra, cast a severe punishment on the latter so that he might be barred from taking Soma, Indra could not restrain himself and took the recourse of stealing<sup>148</sup> of soma to satisfy his thirst.<sup>149</sup> There is another legend in which we are told that Soma was taken away from Indra by Namuci as a result of which the latter was killed in the hands of Indra.

Though more anthropomorphic in the Brāhmanas, Soma's original character as a plant is not totally lost. His identification with juice ('rasaḥ somah' — S. Br. VII. 3, 1, 3) or his description as the food of the gods ('devānām annāni' — S. Br. I. 6, 4, 15) surely refers to the extract from the soma-plant. Accordingly, he has been described in the Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa as the best thing to be offered to the gods — uttamam vā etaddhāvīr yat Somah.<sup>150</sup> His association with

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148. S. Br. I. 6, 3, 6-7.

149. S. Br. XII. 7, 3, 1-3.

150. S. Br. XII. 8, 2, 12.

Indra is also more in his juice-form and the Brāhmaṇa says that Indra being the chief of the gods, the first draught of king Soma belongs to him.

### Viṣṇu

Viṣṇu, who has attained capital importance in the Brāhmaṇic mythology was, however, of subordinate personality in the R̥gveda. The importance of Viṣṇu in the Brāhmaṇa is mainly due to his connection with sacrifice and he has been actually identified with sacrifice for more than a few times in the Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa. His anthropomorphic character is very poor and we do not get any definite idea regarding his birth or any of his personal traits and character. The etymology of his name has been suggested by the latter commentators and most of them agree to derive it from a verb  $\sqrt{\text{viṣ}}$  meaning 'to pervade'. In Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa also we have an indirect reference to this etymology.<sup>151</sup>

Viṣṇu in the R̥.V. appears evidently as a solar deity. The only anthropomorphic trait of Viṣṇu that he takes three strides (Vikrama) has been explained almost unanimously as referring to the course of the sun. In the Brāhmaṇas this special trait of Viṣṇu is unaltered and in the Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa he is conceived as taking his three steps in earth,<sup>152</sup> air and heaven.

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151. S. Br. I. 9, 3, 9.

152. S. Br. I. 1, 2, 13; I. 9, 3, 9 etc.

But his connection with the sacrifice is most prominent in the Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa and the sacrificial data, which we get about him, place him as a principal deity associated with sacrificial cult. The Yajus formulae belong to him; so also the sacrificial stake in the animal-sacrifice. At the New-moon sacrifice, a pap of rice and fresh milk is offered to him. He also shares the oblation of soma-drops along with Viśve Devāh.

The importance of Viṣṇu is also seen in his activities in association with other gods. He is the associate of Agni and Soma with whom he forms the thunderbolt. He is said to have assisted Prajāpati in his creation and Varuṇa to <sup>153</sup>recover his lost vigour. In a legend in the Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa the gods are said to have gained the whole earth with the help of Viṣṇu seized as a dwarf. In another passage, <sup>154</sup>Viṣṇu is said to have acquired for the gods the all-pervading power which they now possess by striding through the three worlds. Viṣṇu's name is also closely allied with that of Indra. While the R.V. records that in company with Viṣṇu, Indra slew Vrtra, <sup>155</sup>the Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa <sup>156</sup>describes Indra as shooting the thunderbolt at Vrtra while Viṣṇu follows him.

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153. S. Br. I. 2, 5, 1ff.

The famous scholar J. Muir in his Original Sanskrit Texts, IV, p.122, has pointed out that in this legend we get the germ of the Dwarf Incarnation of Viṣṇu in later tradition.

154. S. Br. I. 9, 3, 9.

155. S. Br. VI. 20, 2.

156. S. Br. V. 5, 5, 1.

Viṣṇu's importance is revealed in several other legends in which he has attained a cosmogonic character. Some of these legends have their seed in the hymns of the R.V., but most of these seem to have developed later. Thus in one of the legends<sup>157</sup> Viṣṇu, the sacrifice incarnate, has been described as a boar under the name of Emuṣā who is stated to have raised up the earth from the waters. Thus myth, together with the dwarf myth about Viṣṇu forms the two legends of incarnation (avatāra) in the later tradition of the Purāṇas. Another myth tells us how Viṣṇu attained the highest excellence among the gods and how his head, with the end of his bow sprung asunder was cut off and became the sun (Āditya) in the yonder sky.<sup>158</sup> Here we get Viṣṇu's gradual ascendancy to prominence among the gods, and at the same time his original character as a solar deity is not affected.

### Rudra :

Besides Viṣṇu Rudra is another deity who was less mentioned in the Rgvedic mythology, but later he attained special prominence in the Brāhmanic period.<sup>159</sup> The Rgvedic

157. S. Br. XIV, 1, 2, 11.

158. S. Br. XIV. 1, 1, 1ff.

159. Rudra in the R.V. possesses a particularly malevolent and antagonistic character and consequently he is the most dreaded god there. The priestly poets have often expressed their anxiety for protection from the destructive weapons of this god. For this peculiar trait of Rudra's character, some scholars are tended to suggest that Rudra was Non-Aryan in his origin.

Rudra is frequently associated with the Maruts. He is often mentioned as their father or they as his children.<sup>160</sup> In the Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa Rudra attains more importance as an individual deity who bears the title Kṣatra.<sup>161</sup> The Brāhmaṇa also reveals his more intimate connection with Agni than with the other gods. At one place he is said to be created by Agni. He is also identified with Agni in the Śat. Brāhmaṇa (VI. 1, 3, 10). Again the names Rudra, Śarva, Ugra, Asāni, Bhava and Mahādeva are used to denote the different forms of Agni (S. Br. VI. 1, 3, 7) and elsewhere Śarva, Bhava, Paśupati and Rudra are said to be names of Agni (S. Br. I. 7, 3, 8). In the Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa Rudra has also been identified with the abstract deity Manu (Wrath). In this context the etymology of his name has been given : he was called Rudra because he originated from crying ( √ rud ).<sup>162</sup> It was Prajāpati's tears which made him born hundred-headed, thousand-eyed and hundred-quivered.<sup>163</sup> About his personal acquaintance nothing very much is told, except only that he has a sister<sup>164</sup> named Ambikā, with whom he is offered the Tryambaka offering.

Rudra as a god is particularly connected with cattle in the Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa. He is Paśupati, the lord of beasts.<sup>165</sup>

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160. Rudras or Rudriyas - I. 64, 2; V. 42, 15; VI. 50, 4; VIII. 20, 17.

161. S. Br. IX. 11, 15.

162. S. Br. IX. 1, 1, 6.

163. S. Br. VI. 1, 3, 10.

164. S. Br. II. 6, 2, 9.

165. S. Br. V. 3, 3, 7.

Wild animals are assigned to him. He has been implored again and again in the Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa on different occasions not to harm the domestic animals. In the Asvamedha sacrifice, by offering the Sviṣṭakṛt oblation to Rudra, the sacrificer is said to shield the cattle from Rudra so that Rudra does not prowl after the cattle.<sup>166</sup> He is characterised as fierce in the R.V. and this trait of his character is equally present in his Brāhmanical characterisation. The Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa says that even gods were afraid of the strung bow and the arrows of Rudra lest he should destroy them.<sup>167</sup> In the Tryambaka oblation Rudra has been depicted as a violent god and it has been recorded there that by offering the Tryambaka oblation the sacrificer delivers from Rudra's power both the descendants that are born and those that are unborn and his offspring is brought forth without disease and blemish.<sup>168</sup> This maleficent character of Rudra probably isolated him from the host of other gods and it has been said in the Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa that when the gods attained heaven, Rudra remained behind.<sup>169</sup> He is also said to be at first denied of his share in the sacrifice performed by the gods and to get it at last by threatening the gods.<sup>170</sup> From the textual evidence of the Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa also it seems probable that Rudra was included in the sacrificial pantheon of the Vedic Aryans only

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166. Ś. Br. XIII. 3, 4, 3.

167. Ś. Br. IX. 1, 1, 16.

168. Ś. Br. II. 6, 6, 2.

169. Ś. Br. I. 7, 3, 1.

170. Ś. Br. I. 7, 3, 4.

at a later period, because we always find there a strain of associating Rudra with the refuse or the remainder that is left after the oblations have been made. Thus we read in the Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa : "When the priest cuts off the fore-portion he cuts out what is injured in the sacrifice, what belongs to Rudra."<sup>171</sup> Also "That god is the recipient of refuse (remains of an offering) and gavedhuka seeds are refuse."<sup>172</sup>

Finally, it should be added that though in the Vedic literature, Rudra is althrough a violent god, yet he has a benign form also. Even the malevolent Rudra of the Rgveda has a benign form to which the priestly poets appeal for protection. In the Śatarudrīya hymns of the Yajurveda, Rudra has been praised in his various gracious aspects. The Śat. Brāhmaṇa also points out the benign form of Rudra when in the Tryambaka oblation<sup>it</sup> prescribes a hymn as a prayer for blessing in which Rudra is invoked as a remedy for cattle.<sup>173</sup> This gradual ascendance of Rudra from violence to benignity is quite normal in a mythology, and helps us to understand the Rudra-Śiva conception of the Purāṇic tradition.

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171. Ś. Br. I. 7, 4, 9.

172. Ś. Br. V. 3, 3, 7.

173. Ś. Br. II. 6, 2, 11.

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Minor gods :

Besides the prominent gods dealt with in the earlier pages, there are some minor gods in the Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa. These are mentioned quite sporadically in connection with particular rituals. In the R.V. however, they occupy some importance and their position is not so minor. These deities are Pūṣan, the two Aśvinas, Maruts, Savitr, Yama, Tvastṛ, Bṛhaspati, and such few others who have begun to lose their importance as individual deities and the only importance they have is due to their connection with the sacrifice. Among them Pūṣan is the same pastoral deity as in the Rgveda, who represents the cattle. The reason of this identification has been shown in the Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa as follows — Pūṣan means prosperity (puṣṭi) and cattle also means prosperity, since sacrifice means the cattle.<sup>174</sup> He is also described as the distributor of portions to the gods, who with his own hands, places the food before them.<sup>175</sup> He is the guardian of the paths, the watcher of men and the protector of travellers. Karambha is his distinctive food and there is a legend in the Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa<sup>176</sup> which narrates that he lost his teeth in his attempt to taste the sacrificial offering. Thus he is characterised as a toothless god and is closely associated

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174. S. Br. III. 1, 4, 9.

175. S. Br. I. 1, 2, 17.

176. S. Br. I. 7, 4, 7.

with Bhaga who is said to have become blind for committing the similar fault.<sup>177</sup>

The Asvins, the twin inseparable deities of Vedic pantheon, had considerable importance in the R.V. but in the S. Br. they are of rare occurrence. The special importance showered on them in the Brāhmaṇa is that they are described as the Adhvaryus of the gods.<sup>178</sup> Their connection with any definite phenomenon is difficult to ascertain and they have been interpreted variously from ancient times. In the Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa they are once identified with earth and heaven.<sup>179</sup> They share several sacrificial offerings and as they are red-white in colour, a red-white goat is offered to them.<sup>180</sup> The special trait common to them both in the R.V. and in the Brāhmaṇa is their medical skill. They are the divine physicians and are described as having cured Indra and restored the head of DadhyañcĀtharvāna. They are also said to help the gods to complete the sacrifice by supplying its head.<sup>181</sup> In another legend Cyavana is said to have been restored to youth by the Asvins.

The Maruts are the group of gods and they are often represented as the 'people' (viśah). In the R.V. they are the

177. S. Br. I. 7, 4, 7-8.

178. S. Br. I. 1, 2, 17 ; IV. 1, 5, 16

179. S. Br. IV. 1, 5, 16

180. S. Br. V. 5, 4, 1.

181. S. Br. IV. 1, 5

intimate associates of Indra. This is indicated also in the Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa : "Indra is indeed the nobility and the Maruts are the people; and the nobility are the controllers of the people."<sup>182</sup> It may be mentioned in this connection that besides the Maruts, the Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa frequently mentions three other groups of gods, the Vasus of the earth, the Rudras of air and the Ādityas of heaven.<sup>183</sup>

Savitṛ was most probably a solar deity in the R. V. Originally being an epithet applied to the Sun he is more an abstract deity and is represented in the Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa as the impeller of the gods.<sup>184</sup> In an invitational formula in the S. Br. Savitṛ is called rāṣṭra and rāṣṭrapati.<sup>185</sup>

Tvaṣṭṛ who was an abstract deity in the R. V. reappears in the Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa as the same skilful workman. He is characteristically a creator of forms.<sup>186</sup> He is also the possessor of beasts.<sup>187</sup> The Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa records a conflict between Tvaṣṭṛ and Indra in which Indra is said to forcibly drink off Soma which was refused to him by Tvaṣṭṛ.<sup>188</sup> This probably points to the rise of Indra as the sacrificial

182. S. Br. II. 5, 2, 27.

183. S. Br. I. 3, 4, 12; also S. Br. IV. 3, 5, 1.

184. S. Br. I. 1, 2, 17:

185. S. Br. XI. 4, 3, 14.

186. S. Br. XI. 4, 3, 14.

187. S. Br. III. 7, 3, 11.

188. S. Br. I. 6, 3, 1ff.

deity in the later vedic period.

Another god Brhaspati, originally the 'lord of prayers' reappears in the Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa as Vācaspati,<sup>189</sup> the lord of speech, specially signifying him as a god of eloquence and wisdom in the later vedic period. He is said to be the priestly caste in the Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa<sup>190</sup> and in a legend, he is said to have helped the gods in driving away the<sup>191</sup> Asuras who made disturbance to the performance of sacrifice. Again, when unbelief took hold of men regarding the use of the performance of sacrifice, it was Brhaspati who persuaded them<sup>192</sup> to continue the sacrifice.

Last of all, I mention Yama who in the vedic pantheon is associated with the idea of 'death' which is an unavoidable factor in human life. In the Vedic mythology he is the chief of the dead and he is always called the 'king' and never the 'god'. In the Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa he is said to be the Kṣatra<sup>193</sup> (nobility or ruling power) and the Fathers (deceased ancestors) are the clansmen. The Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa further says<sup>194</sup> that he is immortal because 'death' has no further death. In the R.V. Yama is connected with the Sun as his son (cf. vivasvantam huve yah pitā te-X.14,5). In the Śatapatha

189. S. Br. XIV. 4, 1, 23.

190. S. Br. III. 9, 1, 10.

191. S. Br. IX. 2, 3, 2-3.

192. S. Br. I. 2, 5, 25-26.

193. S. Br. VII. 1, 1, 4.

194. S. Br. X. 5, 2, 3.

Brāhmaṇa, he himself appears as the Sun — "Yama is he who shines yonder, for it is he who controls everything."<sup>195</sup> He has also been identified with Agni<sup>196</sup> and his connection with Soma is also not infrequent. While describing the Pitṛyajña, this Brāhmaṇa refers to the Father as 'Somavantah' (accompanied by or possessed of Soma) or Soma as Pitṛmat (accompanied by the Fathers). Yama as the chief of the Fathers, too, becomes connected with Soma. All these connections and identifications of Yama with other deities, however, show some traits of his importance in the Brāhmanical period. He has also some connection with sacrifice and he is invoked in course of kindling the Gārhapatya fire.

The discussion about Brāhmanic godhead remains incomplete if we do not say something about the goddesses. Properly speaking, goddesses occupy a very subordinate position and play an insignificant role in the Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa. They have no such notable connection with the rituals of sacrifice and this probably led them to insignificance in the Brāhmaṇas. By name, they are the same Aditi, Vāk or Sarasvatī as in the R̥.V., but they appear in the Brāhmaṇas in the context of sacrifices. Thus Aditi who in the R̥.V. seems to be an abstract deity standing for the 'boundlessness' or the 'vast expanse' of the sky (cf. Macdonell - *Medic Mythology*, p. 121), is mentioned in the Brāhmaṇas as one of the five gods, worthy of offering. In the Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa, she is said to be the

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195. S. Br. XIV. 1, 3, 4.

196. S. Br. VII. 2, 1, 10.

Earth and the fee for an offering to her is a cow.<sup>197</sup> Vāk is no more the philosophical principle (vāgdevī) of the R.V. (X. 121), she is merely a divine figure who helps the soma performance by bringing soma who was stolen away by the Gandharvas. Ilā usually forms a triad with Sarasvatī and Mahī or Bhāratī and in the Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa she is called the daughter of Manu.<sup>198</sup> The Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa also mentions Rākā and Sinivālī who in later Vedic texts are generally connected with the phases of the moon. Another goddess viz. Kuhu appears here and she is none but the personification of the new moon.

Goddesses as wives of the great gods (devānām patnyah) are generally of insignificance in the R.V. but in the Brāhmaṇas they have acquired a somewhat established place. The cult of offering as patnīsamāja obviously and mainly connected with female goddesses who are the spouses of the male gods.

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SOCIAL CONDITIONGeographical and Historical background

Scholars are generally of opinion that India is not the original home of the Indo-Aryans.<sup>1</sup> In which far-off days they penetrated into India we do not know but we can certainly know from the Vedic literature something about their first settlement and gradual expansion. The R̥gveda gives us the impression that the first centre of Aryan civilisation in India was in the Indus Valley, the north-west part of India. But the Aryan settlement was still expanding eastwards and from the end of the R̥gvedic period onwards we notice the gradual expansion of Aryan civilisation from the Indus Valley to the Gangetic plains. The ample references which we get in the later Vedic texts sufficiently help us to form a fair idea of the geographical condition of the Aryans in India. A passage in the Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa<sup>2</sup> shows the acquaintance of the Vedic Aryans with the eastern and the western oceans which probably suggests that "the Arabian Sea and the Indian Ocean were known to the people of that period". Among the rivers, the far-famed river Sarasvatī of the R̥v.<sup>3</sup> has almost disappeared in the Brāhmaṇas. Instead, the rivers of the eastern region have become prominent at this time. The Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa has specially referred to

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1. R.C. Majumdar, Ancient India, p. 29.

2. Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa, I. 6, 3, 11.

3. Cf. ambitame naḍitame devītame i.e. "Sarasvatī the greatest among rivers and the greatest of goddesses." R̥v. II. 41, 16.

the river Sadānīra (literally, the river with perennial water). It has been mentioned as the boundary line between the Kosalas (modern Ayodhyā) and the Videhas (present Tirhut).<sup>4</sup> This river has been identified with Gaṇḍakī by Weber and Eggeling;<sup>5</sup> the authors of the Vedic Index too lend support to this view.<sup>6</sup> Pargiter, however, holds that it is the river Rapti.

Several new placenames are met with in the Brāhmaṇas which are not found in the R̥gveda. Some of these have been identified with great certainty now-a-days. Thus the Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa (XIII. 5, 4, 7) mentions the name of a town as Parivakrā where king Kraivya Pāṇcāla performed his horse-sacrifice. Prof. Weber<sup>8</sup> has identified this town with later Ekacakrā which was situated near Kampīla. The Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa itself mentions one city named Kampīla (XIII. 2, 8, 3) which also is identified with modern Kampīla situated on the old Ganges between Badaun and Farrukhavad. Another town Āsandivat<sup>9</sup> which is mentioned as the capital of king Janamejaya Parīkṣit<sup>9</sup> is generally thought to be located in modern Kurukṣetra. Some like to identify it with Hastināpura of the Mahabharata times.<sup>10</sup> Further the term Kauśāmbeya used in the

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4. Ś. Br. I. 4,1,17: saīṣā apyetahi kosala-videhānām maryādā /

5. Indische Studien, I, 172, 181.

6. Sacred Books of the East, Vol. XII, p. 104.

7. A.A. Macdonell and A.B. Keith, Vedic Index, II, p. 422.

8. Indische Studien, I, 192.

9. Ś. Br. XIII. 5, 4, 2.

10. Cf. The Vedic Age, p. 251.



Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa (XII. 2, 2, 13) suggests that there was certainly a city called Kauśāmbī, an important city of ancient India, connected with the name of the famous traditional king Udayana Vatsarāja. Indologists identify this famous town with modern Kosam on the Yamunā.<sup>11</sup>

Names of various tribes occupying different regions are also met with in the Brāhmaṇas. In this respect also we find that changes have taken place. Some old tribes of the Ṛgveda have disappeared or reappear under different names; side by side new tribes have also gained prominence. Among such tribes the closely allied Kuru-pāñcālas seem to have attained importance at the time of the Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa. These people resided in the Madhyadesa.<sup>12</sup> The Kurus as a tribe are not mentioned in the Ṛgveda, except in an epithet 'Kuruśravaṇa'.<sup>13</sup> The name 'Pāñcāla' is also not found in the Ṛgveda but the Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa (XIII. 5, 4, 7) states that the Pāñcālas were called Krivi in the previous Ṛgvedic age and the Ṛgveda actually mentions this name.<sup>14</sup> Scholars think that "the Kuru kingdom roughly correspond to the modern Thanesar, Delhi and the upper Gangetic Doab",<sup>15</sup> and "the territory of the Pāñcālas roughly correspond to the Bareilly,

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11. Cf. The Vedic Age, p. 252.

12. Cf. Aitareya Brahmana, VIII. 38, 3.

13. R.V. X, 32, 4; 33, 4.

14. R.V. VII. 20, 24.

15. H.C. Roychowdhury, Political History of Ancient India, p. 20.

Badaun, Farrukhabad and adjoining districts of the United provinces."<sup>16</sup> These two tribes were so closely allied at the time of the Brāhmaṇas that their names often occur jointly. The Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa has highly spoken of these two clans. The mode of sacrifice of those people is deemed as the best in the Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa when preference is shown to a sacrificial practice only because it belongs to the Kuru-pāñcālas.<sup>17</sup> The speech and language of them also are praised as pure — "Pure Speech (pathyā svasti) discerned the northern direction; hence the people of kuru-pāñcālas speak the pure language."<sup>18</sup> The two great traditional figures Parīkṣit and Janamejaya are mentioned as the rulers of these two clans and the Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa (XIII. 5, 4, 2-3) states that it is under their rule that those states attained the highest glory.

Like the two allied tribes Kuru-pāñcālas the Tr̥ṣṭus and the Sr̥ñjayas are also closely allied. The Śat. Brāhmaṇa attests to the fact that these two clans were once jointly ruled by one ruler and one purohita who was known as Devabhāga Śrantarṣa.<sup>19</sup> The Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa (XII. 9, 3, 1ff.) further refers to a historical incident relating to the Sr̥ñjayas.

Another tribe of people called the Matsyas was known in ancient India, since they appear in the Vedic texts, sometimes

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16. Ibid., p. 59.

17. Ś. Br. I. 7, 2, 8.

18. Ś. Br. III. 2, 3, 15: udīcīmeva dīśam / pathyā svastyā prājānam stasmādatrottara hi vāg vadati kurupāñcālatrā /

19. Ś. Br. II. 4, 4, 5.

allied with the Vāsas, sometimes with the Śālvas. The Śat. Brāhmaṇa (XIII. 5, 4, 9) has referred to their king Dhvasan Daitavana while giving the list of the performers of the horse-sacrifice. The Śālvas are also mentioned in the Ś. Br. (X. 4, 1, 10) and they are now thought to be located in what is <sup>20</sup> ~~now~~ the present Alwar state.

Among the westerners or the Pratiçyas, a tribe called Bāhika is mentioned in the Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa (I. 7, 3, 8). They called Agni by the name 'Bhava' as distinct from the Prācyas who called it Śarva. The Madra people, most probably residing in present Kasmir was famous for their Vedic studies as is evident from the reference in the Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa which states that sages of Northern India retired to the Madra country to study the Vedas. <sup>21</sup> More interesting is the mention of Satvants, a tribe of people who seem to reside somewhere in the Southern part of India and was under the rule of the Bhoja kings (cf. Ait. Br. VIII. 38-3). From the reference of the Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa it appears that at first they were contiguous to the Bharatas' territory (VIII. 5, 4, 11) and were often raided by the Bharatas. The Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa (XIII. 5, 4, 21) actually records the defeat of the Satvants by king Bharata who took away their sacrificial horse. The name of another tribe Keśin is found in the Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa (XI. 8, 4, 6). Bhandarkar <sup>22</sup> identifies them with a branch of

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20. Dr. A.D. Pusalkar, The Vedic Age, p. 254.

21. Ś. Br. III. 2, 3, 15

22. Bhandarkar, Some Aspects of Ancient Indian Culture, p. 3.

the Pāñcālas. Mention is also made of the Kekayas (Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa, X. 6, 1, 2) in connection with king Aśvapati who was a man of great learning. The name Mleccha, found in the Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa,<sup>23</sup> probably does not refer to any particular tribe. The word is used in the sense of a barbarian in speech who uses 'he'laya' for 'he'rayah' (ho, you enemies).

The Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa also mentions the names of several states attaining prominence in those days. Among them most important are the two states — Kosala (modern Ayodhyā) and Videha (present Tirhut or Purniya in Bihar). The non-mention of these two states in the R̥gveda indicates also their non-existence. In the Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa they are definitely mentioned in connection with the legend of Videgha Māthava<sup>24</sup> which records in unambiguous terms the expansion of Aryan civilisation and culture from the west to the east. As we learn from the story, king Videgha and his priest Gotama Rāghuguna carrying the sacred sacrificial fire eastward from the banks of Sarasvatī proceeds over Kosala as far as Sadānira (present Gandak) where their progress was checked for a while. Afterwards they crossed Sadānira and settled in Videha (which came to be so called probably after the tribal name of king Māthava). The legend is very significant and is an important "geographical landmark", since it definitely indicates the progress of the Aryans upto the territory of Videha in the

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23. Ś. Br. III. 2, 1, 24.

24. Ś. Br. I, 4, 1, 10ff.

later Vedic age. The Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa (XIII. 5, 4, 4) further refers to the Kosala king Para-Āṭnara Hairaṇyanābha to have performed the horse-sacrifice. In the later books of the Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa king Janaka of Videha appears to be a great promoter of learning and the name of Vājñavalkya, the author of the Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa is specially associated with this king.

Another state Kāśīs (identified with Banaras) attained prominence in this age and its name is sometimes found along with the Videha and Kosala. The Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa (XIII. 5, 4, 19ff.) narrates the story of the defeat of king Dhṛtarāṣṭra of Kāśīs by the Bharata king Śatānīka Sātrājita. In Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa (III. 3, 2, 1-2) is found the term Naiśidha as an epithet of king Naḍa. It probably refers to a state called the Niṣadha the location of which is not known with certainty, "though it may be assumed to be contiguous to Vidarbha."<sup>25</sup>

The above discussion reveals on the whole that during the Brāhmaṇic age the Aryans were people with adventurous spirit, expanding their territories and establishing their

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25. A.D. Pusalkar, The Vedic Age, p. 257.

King Nala of Niṣadha is a celebrated figure in the Mahābhārata and the Purāṇas. The term Niṣadha should not be confounded with Niṣāda, since "Niṣāda was a general term used for a Non-Aryan tribe, whereas the Niṣadhas in all probability, belonged to the Aryan fold." (Ibid., p. 257).

cultural uphold in all directions. They occupied the Gangetic Doab and still advanced towards the east along the Yamunā and the Sadānīra (Gaṇḍak). Towards the north and the north-west their territory spread upto Kasmir, the land of the Mādra people. Though the Vindhya mountain (which is the line of demarcation between the North and the South) does not appear in the Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa, yet the penetration of the Vedic Aryans in the South is definitely indicated by the mention of the Satvants.

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Caste-system :

Caste-system has definitely become more developed at the time of the Brāhmaṇas than in the previous R̥gvedic age. There is some controversy whether the caste-system in its full-fledged form was well-established in the R̥gvedic society. The R̥gvedic hymns, however, evince the existence of different social ranks in the R̥gvedic society, such as the priests, the warriors, the husbandmen and the serfs. In a hymn called the Puruṣa-sūkta which occurs in the tenth maṇḍala of the R̥k-saṁhitā we find the first mention of the four categories by their technical names : "The Brāhmaṇa was his mouth; the Rājanya was his arms; the Vaiśya became his thighs; the Sūdra was born from his feet."<sup>1</sup> But neither in this hymn nor elsewhere in the Saṁhitā there is any reference which may throw any light upon the origin of castes, or which may prove the rigidity of the caste-system in those days. What we can guess from this is that the R̥gveda was aware of the four social divisions which were gradually gaining their strong foothold in the social structure. At the time of the Brāhmaṇas, caste-system seems to be more or less distinctly established among people.<sup>2</sup> The conception of caste-division has become so much deeply rooted in this period that the Brāhmaṇas often make caste-distinction among the gods also. Again and again the

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1. R.V. X. 90. 12 : brāhmaṇo'sya mukhamāśīdvāhū rājanyaḥ  
kṛtaḥ / ūru tadasya yadvaiśyaḥ padbhyāṁ sūdro ajāyata //
  2. Cf. S. Br. V. 5, 4, 9 : catvāro vai varṇāḥ, brāhmaṇo  
rājanyo, vaiśyaḥ sūdraśca /

Sātapatha Brāhmaṇa has said that Agni and Brhaspati are Brāhmaṇas among the gods;<sup>3</sup> Indra, Varuna, Soma etc. are Kṣatra or Kṣatriyas.<sup>4</sup> The Vaisya class generally represent the common people of the society and hence among the gods those that appear in groups like Rudras, Maruts, Ādityas, Visve-deva-s are called Vaisyas. The caste-distinction is found not only among gods and men, but in other spheres also. Thus the Sātapatha Brāhmaṇa mentions that in the vegetable world Palāśa is Brāhmaṇa.<sup>5</sup> Even the Vedic metres which are supposed to shroud all sins of people (chandāmsi chādanāt — Nir. VII. 12, 2.), are mentioned in terms of caste-distinction.<sup>6</sup> Thus Gāyatrī is Brāhmaṇa whereas Tristubh is Kṣatriya.<sup>6</sup> In nature the three seasons are mentioned as belonging to the three castes.<sup>7</sup>

From these evidences it is clear on the whole that caste-division was well-established in the Brāhmaṇic age. Though it was not as rigid as in later times it was certainly

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3. brahma vai brhaspatiḥ / III. 1, 4, 15; III. 9, 1, 11; agnirū vai brahma / VIII. 5, 1, 12; āgni-reva brahma / X. 4, 1, 5; agnirbrahma / III. 2, 2, 7.
  4. indraḥ kṣatram / X. 4, 1, 5; kṣatram vā indraḥ / II. 5, 2, 27; II. 5, 4, 8; III. 9, 1, 16; IV. 3, 3, 6; kṣatram varunaḥ / IV. 1, 4, 1; V. 1, 5, 3; XIII. 1, 5, 3; kṣatram vai somaḥ / III. 4, 1, 10; IX. 3, 3, 7; V. 3, 5, 8.
  5. S. Br. I. 1, 1, 4 : brahma vai palāśaḥ.
  6. S. Br. VII. 4, 5, 6 : gāyatraś chandasā brāhmaṇaḥ tristubh chandasā kṣatriyaḥ /
  7. Cf. S. Br. II. 1, 3, 5 : brahmaiva vasantaḥ / kṣatrāṇi grīsmo viḍeva varsāḥ /



becoming well-marked during this age. This is somewhat clear from the evidences furnished by the text of the Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa. While the R̥gveda community shows a sort of homogeneity in social manners, we find that in the post-R̥gvedic age rules were being prescribed which made different classes of people in the society submit to different forms of formalities and etiquette. In the Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa we get some such instances where caste-distinction has been maintained. For example, it has prescribed four different modes of address evidently with different degrees of politeness (as ehi, ādrava, āgahi and ādihāva) for the four different castes (viz. Brāhmaṇa, Kṣatriya, Vaiśya and Sūdra respectively).<sup>8</sup> In the Puruṣamedha sacrifice four different sizes of funeral mounds are heard of for the four different castes.<sup>9</sup>

The same Brāhmaṇa again prescribes that victims of different castes should be seized for offering to different gods.<sup>10</sup> At the sprinkling ceremony the upper three castes took part, and the Brāhmaṇa has prescribed three different kinds of wood for the upper three castes for performing their sprinkling.<sup>11</sup> Again of the three mystic utterances — bhūh, bhuvah and svah, the first is connected with the Brāhmaṇa,

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8. S. Br. I. 1, 4, 12.

9. S. Br. XIII. 8, 3, 11.

10. S. Br. XIII. 6, 2, 10.

11. S. Br. V. 3, 2, 11.

the second with the Kṣatriya and the third with the Vaiśya.<sup>12</sup>

Regarding the origin of the four castes the Brāhmaṇas, like the R.V. do not throw much light. We, however, get reference to some mythological source viz. the Puruṣa or Prajāpati in the R.V. The Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa similarly connects the origin of the upper three castes or varṇas with the creator Prajāpati and he is said to have variously created them from the three mystic words bhūh, bhuvaḥ and svaḥ.<sup>13</sup> Regarding the origin of the Sūdra class the Brāhmaṇa has said nothing.

The status of the Brāhmaṇa :

In the structure of the Brāhmaṇical society the Brāhmaṇa-class undoubtedly held supreme position and was the most privileged section. Their supremacy depended mainly on their connection with the sacrifice. It is true that all the higher three castes, Brāhmaṇa, Rājanya and Vaiśya were eligible to perform sacrifice,<sup>14</sup> but the Brāhmaṇa alone had the right to<sup>15</sup> partake of the remainings of the sacred oblation in a sacrifice.

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12. S. Br. II. 1, 4, 12. The manner in which such rules are prescribed does not reveal any rigidity. These appear to be innocent-looking enjoinings which refer simply to caste-division and not to rigid caste-distinction.

13. S. Br. II. 1, 4, 12 : bhūrīti prajāpatiḥ brahma ajanayata, bhuva iti kṣatram svarīti viśametāvat vā idam sarvaṁ yāvat brahma kṣatram vit sarvenaivādhīyate /

14. S. Br. III. 1, 1, 9.

15. Cf. Ait. Br. VII. 34, 1.

Priesthood seems to have become hereditary in this age and priesthood was synonymous with the Brāhmaṇa.<sup>16</sup> As Purohita he acted as the spiritual guide of the king as well as his adviser in temporal and socio-political matters.

This importance of the Brāhmaṇa as a Purohita endowed him with the status of superiority to others. The Brāhmaṇa-text establishes the superiority of the Brāhmaṇa-class in indubitable terms : "The Brāhmaṇa descended from a ṛṣi indeed is all deities".<sup>17</sup> Elsewhere also the Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa has given the Brāhmaṇa-class a position as equal as, if not higher than that assigned to the gods. Consequently, the Brāhmaṇas in this age enjoyed some special privilege which the other castes did not have. They have been declared as beyond the royal ordinances when at the Rājasūya ceremony the consecrated king is announced as the king of all people except the Brāhmaṇas, because "God Soma is the king of us i.e. the Brāhmaṇas" (somo'smākaṁ brahmaṇānām rājeti — V. 3, 8, 12). The Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa thereby excludes the Brāhmaṇas from the jurisdiction of the power of the king and makes them such as are not to be subjected to any mortal king. This certainly shows the special prerogative enjoyed by the Brāhmaṇas in those days. Not only that, the Brāhmaṇas also deserved protection from the society at all costs. The Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa has warned the king not to oppress the Brāhmaṇas because in

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16. S. Br. V. 1, 1, 11.

17. S. Br. XII. 4, 4, 6 : brāhmaṇo vā ārṣeyah sarvā devatāḥ /

that case "he will fare the worse or become poorer for doing so."<sup>18</sup> Elsewhere also the Brāhmaṇa states that people should "guard the Brāhmaṇa by four duties — by (showing him) respect and liberality, and by granting him security against oppression and security against capital punishment."<sup>19</sup> The killing of a Brāhmaṇa was regarded as the most contemptuous offence. "Whosoever kills a human Brāhmaṇa is deemed guilty" says the Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa.<sup>20</sup>

#### The Status of the Kṣatriya :

The Kṣatriya or the ruling class also commanded almost the same importance in the society of the Brāhmaṇical period as the Brāhmaṇas had. They were mainly the ruler and the fighter; they were the symbol of vigour (kṣatram). Their strength lay in fighting with the opposition, — yuddham vai rājanyasya vīryam.<sup>21</sup> The Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa further observes that "men of the military or ruling class are known by their chariot and missile." (rathena ca śarena ca rājanya-vandhavah — I. 2, 4, 2). Not only fighting, but protecting the people was also regarded as the main duty of the Kṣatriyas, specially of the king. The king has been described in the Brāhmaṇa as the upholder of dharma or religious duties of the people. He was above the general people who used to pay him taxes (imā viśah kṣatriyāya valim haranti — I. 3, 2, 15).

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18. S. Br. XIII. 1, 5, 4.

19. S. Br. XI. 5, 7, 1.

20. S. Br. III. 9, 4, 17.

21. S. Br. XIII. 1, 5, 6.

The social status of the Kṣatriya will become more evident if we try to bring out their position in relation to the priestly class, the Brāhmaṇas. The Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa has again and again mentioned them side by side in order to show their co-identical importance in the then society. We have already seen that in the Brahmanical society the Brāhmaṇa or the priestly group as "the eater of the oblation" (hutāda) was the most honoured section and enjoyed the greatest privileges, yet the Rājanya or the ruling class was often their equal. In fact, in the ancient society order, the two groups viz. the Brahma (priesthood) and the Kṣatra (nobility) were equally important and a co-operation between the two was always thought to be essential. "Brahma and Kṣatra are the two vital forces" (brahma ca kṣatram cāśāsta ubhe vīrye — VI. 6, 3, 12), says the Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa. The Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa, through a legendary account, has tried to show the exact relation between these two as — "the priesthood is the conceiver and the noble is the doer" (abhigantaiva brahma kartā kṣatriyah — IV. 1, 4, 1). Their relation is between Mitra and Varuṇa, between wisdom and will, representing Mitra and Varuṇa.<sup>22</sup> Ancient India realised that the priesthood cannot stand without the nobility nor the nobility without the priesthood. Every king had, as a rule, a Purohita who was invariably a Brāhmaṇa. He guided the king both in the spiritual and temporal matters. This earthly ideal has been

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22. S. Br. IV. 1, 4, 1-6.

reflected in the relation of the divine world also. In the heavenly kingdom Indra is the king and Br̥haspati his Purohita.<sup>28</sup>

The general trend of the Brāhmanical society was, however, to establish the superiority of the Brāhmanas over the Rājanya class. The declaration that all men except the Brāhmanas are subject to the mortal king shows the superior position they held. The Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa has further stated clearly that a Brāhmaṇa may be without a king but a king should never get along without a Brāhmaṇa : "It is quite proper that a Brāhmaṇa should be without a king, but were he to obtain a king, it would be conducive to success of both. It is however, quite improper that a king should be without a Brāhmaṇa. .... A Kṣatriya who intends to do a deed, ought, by all means, to resort to a Brāhmaṇa, for he verily succeeds only in the deed sped by the Brāhmaṇa."<sup>24</sup> The superiority of the Brāhmaṇa is also established by the statement that all power of the Kṣatriya is derived from the Brāhmaṇa.<sup>25</sup> It is only natural that the Brāhmanas, the priestly class, should attempt to keep their high position intact. Accordingly, it is found in the Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa that the Brāhmanas were very keen to preserve the integrity of their ritualistic

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23. Ś. Br. V. 1, 1, 11 : brahma hi br̥haspatirbrahma hi brāhmaṇaḥ kṣatram hīndraḥ kṣatram rājanyaḥ //

24. Ś. Br. IV. 1, 4, 6.

25. Ś. Br. XII. 7, 3, 12 : brāhmaṇa eva tat kṣatram janayati brāhmaṇo hi kṣatram jāyate /

knowledge as a secret of their power. The Śātapatha Brāhmaṇa, XI. 8, 4, 5-6 gives us a legend that the counsellors of the Brāhmaṇa Khaṇḍika Audbhāri forbade him to enlighten the king of the Keśin about a certain rite of atonement because they feared that thereby the king would become stronger. The Brāhmaṇa Khaṇḍika himself thought that if he would tell the king then the king's race would prevail in the world; but he himself would gain the other world. Having thus mused he finally enlightened him.

But in spite of all the priestly effort to shut the Kṣatriyas out of all religious and spiritual knowledge, the Rājanya section sometimes showed their capacity of becoming a match for or even superior to the Brāhmaṇas. Even the priestly authors of the Brāhmaṇa-text could not deny their superiority. The Śātapatha Brāhmaṇa XI. 6, 2 gives an account of how the three Brāhmaṇa sages Śvetaketu Āruṇeya, Somaśusṃa Sātyayaज्ञी and Yājñavalkya failed to answer satisfactorily a philosophical question which was later explained by king Janaka. Again in Śātapatha Brāhmaṇa X. 6, 1, we are told that five Brāhmaṇa scholars approached the sage Uddālaka Āruni who <sup>having</sup> failed to solve their problem took them to king Aśvapati who gave them the required instruction.

Thus the relative importance of the Kṣatriyas has not been totally denied in the Brāhmaṇa. In spite of enjoying high position of immunity the Brāhmaṇa did not tend to violate the royal ordinances — yathedaṃ brāhmaṇo rājānamanucarati.

In the Rājasūya sacrifice the royal sacrificer (the Rājanya) was given even a position of higher importance than the Brāhmaṇa. Sometimes in the Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa we come across clear statements to this effect, such as, "The three other castes (including the Brāhmaṇa) follow the Kṣatriya" (ksatriyaṃ prathamam yantamitare trayo varṇāḥ paścādanuyanti — VI. 4, 4, 13) or "There is nothing superior to the Kṣatriya. Hence the Brāhmaṇa worships Kṣatriya from a lower position in the Rājasūya". (ksatrāt param nāsti tasmād brāhmaṇaḥ ksatriyaṃ adhastādūpāste rājasūye — XIV. 4, 2, 23).

#### The Status of the Vaiśya :

The Vaiśyas occupy the third position in the enumeration of the four castes in the Ṛgveda. At the time of the Brāhmaṇas their social rank was also subjugated to the third, the first two being occupied by the Brāhmaṇas and the Kṣatriyas. They consisted of the major portion of the subjects and hence the term 'Viśah', which generally signifies 'people' is often used in the Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa to denote the Vaiśya class.<sup>26</sup> The social status of the Vaiśyas was no less exalted as is revealed in the Brāhmaṇas. Along with the Brāhmaṇas and the Kṣatriyas the Vaiśya-class was also regarded as 'Yajñīya' i.e. they were also eligible to perform sacrifice.<sup>27</sup>

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26. Ś. Br. II. 1, 4, 12 : bhūriti prajāpatiḥ brahma ajanayata,  
bhuva iti kṣatram svariti viśam....;

VI. 5, 1, 12 : viśo vai maruto devaviśastā.../

27. Ś. Br. III. 1, 1, 9.



But a close perusal of the Brāhmaṇa shows that at this time the position of the Vaiśyas was steadily deteriorating, though they were much superior to the Sūdras. It is certain that the necessity of preserving the sacred vedic texts, which already were becoming obscure, increased the importance of the Brāhmaṇas as a professional class of interpreters; on the other hand the rapid extension of the Aryans gave power to the military people and the ruling class. The remaining common people of the Aryan community, the Vaiśya or Vis'as they were called, naturally became inferior to the higher two classes. In the Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa the Vaiśyas have been declared incomplete as against the two higher classes, the Brāhmaṇas and the

Kṣatriyas.<sup>28</sup> Very often the author of the Brāhmaṇa seems to be anxious to impose the superiority of the priestly (Brāhmaṇa) and the ruling (kṣatriya) class upon the Vaiśyas and the Sūdras : "The Brāhmaṇa and the Kṣatriya never go behind the Vaiśya and Sūdra ..... he thus encloses those two castes (viz. Vaiśya and Sūdra) on both sides by the priesthood and the nobility, and made them submissive."<sup>29</sup> It further appears that the people of the priestly class were far more tolerable with the lordship of the ruling class but they were unwilling to allow the Vaiśyas to have any dignified position in the society. This may be substantiated by a passage in the Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa.<sup>30</sup> The passage prescribes that in the Rājasūya

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28. S. Br. VI. 6, 3, 12.

29. S. Br. VI. 4, 4, 13: na kadā cana brāhmaṇas'ca kṣatriyas'ca vaiśyam ca sūdraṁ ca paścādanvitaḥ . . . . . /

30. S. Br. V. 1, 5, 28.

sacrifice the Adhvaryu should offer a cup of honey (madhugraha) to a ksatriya and another to a vaisya and thereby he imbues the ksatriya with truth, prosperity and light and smites the vaisya with untruth, misery and darkness. The submission of the Vaisya-class to the ruling class has also been insisted upon in the Satapatha Brāhmaṇa in the passage which states that "a Vaisya becomes possessed of cattle when he is under the rule of a ksatriya".<sup>31</sup>

#### The Status of the Sūdra :

At the time of the Brāhmaṇas the Sūdras were well-<sup>32</sup> recognised as the servile class. The Satapatha Brāhmaṇa well

31. S. Br. I. 3, 2, 15.

32. Whatever may be the historical fact behind the origin of the four castes, there is hardly any controversy among scholars regarding the origin of the Sūdras. Scholars are more or less sure that the Sūdras are foreign elements in the earliest Aryan community. The Vedic Aryans when they penetrated into the north-west part of India were a homogenous group conscious of their language, religion and culture. But as they gradually advanced eastward they came in clash with the aboriginal tribes of India whom they defeated in almost all cases. These original inhabitants were sharply contrasted in colour with the Aryan invaders. When defeated these original inhabitants became gradually commingled with the people of the Vedic society. The Vedic society, though much friendly with this non-Aryan section, still maintained some distinction. Thus originally there were two varṇas in the earliest vedic society viz. the Ārya varṇa and the Dāsa varṇa. Cf. R.V. III. 34, 9 — *katvī dasyūn prāryān varṇam āva*  
R.V. II. 12, 4 — *yo dāsam varṇam* / Later when the  
*adharaṁ juhākaḥ* /

contd .....

establishes this fact in the passage where the three upper castes viz. the Brāhmaṇa, Kṣatriya and the Vaiśya have been identified with the Brahma, Kṣatra and Maruts respectively, while the Śūdra has been identified with toil (tapo vai śūdrām — XIII. 6, 2, 10). Again, while stating the origin of the upper three castes from the three mystic utterances, viz. bhūh, bhuvah and svah,<sup>33</sup> the Brāhmaṇa is totally silent about the origin of the Śūdras. The deplorable condition of the Śūdras is further noticeable in the matter that while the upper three classes were eligible to sacrifice, the Śūdras were excluded from the right of performing sacrifices. Thus the Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa states that the rite of initiation belonged to the Brāhmaṇa, Kṣatriya and Vaiśya, but never to the Śūdra,<sup>34</sup> hence he was 'ayajñīya' (unfit for sacrifice).<sup>35</sup> He was regarded as a despised creature with whom the consecrated sacrificer was forbidden to speak. "He should talk only with a Brāhmaṇa or a Kṣatriya or a Vaiśya, for these can sacrifice. If any one have occasion to speak to a Śūdra, let him say to another person, 'Tell this man so and so'. This is the rule for an initiated man."<sup>36</sup> Even the touch of a Śūdra

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society began to comprise four social divisions the dāsa varṇa constituted the fourth class viz. the Śūdras. They were meant to serve the upper three castes and naturally occupied the lowest position in the society.

33. S. Br. I. 1, 4, 12.

34. S. Br. III. 1, 2, 10.

35. S. Br. III. 1, 1, 10.

36. S. Br. XIII. 1, 1, 9-10.

was regarded impure on some occasions, such as S. Br. I. 7, 1, 10 prescribes that the milkman of the sacrificial cow must be one of the upper three castes. At another place the Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa forbids the sacrificer to look at the Śūdra and such others and identifies them with untruth (anṛtam strī śūdrah śvā kṛṣṇaḥ śakuni — XIV. 1, 1, 31). The Śūdras were also debarred from entering into the sacrificial ground (III.1,1,9). At the Rājasūya sacrifice in the ceremony of sprinkling the king with holy waters, people of all castes except the Śūdra community take part.

These instances from the Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa certainly prove the religious disabilities on the part of the Śūdras. But the Brāhmaṇa-text is not consistent in this matter, because we notice here a few cases where the Śūdra has been definitely admitted to participation in the sacrifice. Thus the four different kinds of address which were prescribed for four different varṇas such as 'ehi' in the case of a Brāhmaṇa, 'āgahi' and 'ādṛava' in the case of a Vaiśya and Rājanya respectively and 'ādhāva' in the case of a Śūdra (I. 1, 4, 12) certainly prove the admittance of the Śūdra-varṇa into the sphere of sacrificial performance; otherwise the prescription would be useless. In the Rājasūya sacrifice of the eleven offerings known as ratnīnām havinīsi, there is offering to the Śūdras also. But the consequent prescription of an expiatory rite for including those who were unworthy of the sacrifice (ayañīya) into the sacrificial performance, however, emphasizes the inferior status of the Śūdras.

In spite of the degraded status of the Sūdras, we must admit that in the Brāhmanic caste-system 'untouchability' in its later sense, was absent. Yet the supremacy of the sacrifice in this age invested some sort of untouchability in the sphere of sacrificial performance. Generally the Sūdras who were non-Aryans in their origin were treated as lacking ceremonial purity and the Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa has prescribed that there should be no free communication with a Sūdra on the sacrificial ground by men engaged in sacrificial performance (III. 1, 1, 10). It is noteworthy that not only the Sūdras, but even a section of the artisan class who originally belonged to the Vaisya class attained impurity in the eyes of the Vedic ritualists. Thus the touch of a carpenter was regarded as impure during the sacrificial performance and this impurity had to be removed by the sprinkling of sacrificial water.<sup>37</sup>

#### Marriage and family life :

The picture of family life as revealed in the Brāhmaṇas is not very different from that which we find indicated in the preceding age. The patriarchal form of society gave all power to male members and accordingly the unit of family life was under the absolute control of the father. The predominance of man over woman is clearly revealed in the statement of the Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa : "Even if many women are together and there is but a small boy, he takes precedence of them all."

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37. S. Br. I. 1, 3, 12.

But in spite of the general predominance of man in the society, the woman as a wife had a high position in the family life.

A man was regarded incomplete until he got a wife. The Śātapatha Brāhmaṇa states that "a wife is the one-half of the husband; hence one is not fully born but remains incomplete till he gets a wife. One gets everything and becomes a complete whole when he is blessed with a wife."<sup>38</sup>

Marriage was thus an important matter in the life of the Vedic people. With them marriage was not a secular contract; it is a sort of sacrament, a religious ritual. The sacred tie of the conjugal life idealised in the Rgvedic hymns was also held up high in the Brāhmaṇas. The authors of the Brāhmaṇas were conscious about the indissoluble nature of the bondage of marriage. In the following passage of the Śātapatha Brāhmaṇa we get a beautiful expression of the eternal relation between the husband and the wife : "Truth is male, faith is female; mind is husband, speech is wife; wherever the husband is, there is the wife too."<sup>39</sup> That this ideal was accepted not only in theory but was followed in practice also, is clear from the declaration of Sukanyā, a Kṣatriya girl, who married the sage Cyavana : "I shall never repudiate my husband to whom my father offered me."<sup>40</sup> The husband was the mainstay

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38. S. Br. V. 2, 1, 10 : ardho ha vā eṣa ātmano ya j jāyā  
tasmād yāvajjāyāṁ na vindate naiva tāvat prajāyate sarvo  
hi tāvad bhavatyatha yadaiva jāyāṁ vindate /

39. S. Br. XII. 8, 2, 6 : vṛṣā satyaṁ yoṣā śraddhā, vṛṣā nāno  
yoṣā, vāk, yatraiva patistatra jāyā /

40. S. Br. IV. 1, 5, 9.

of the wife (patayo hyeva striyai pratisthā — II. 6, 2, 14) and the wife also always followed the husband (striyah pumsa'-nuvartmāno bhāvukāḥ — XIII. 2, 2, 4).

Thus fidelity to each other was the ideal of conjugal life. Monogamy seems to be the general rule, though in high societies among the people of nobility polygamy was not a rarity. Such permissive verdict of polygamy is contained in the statement of the Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa that "even a single man has many wives" (ekasya pumsa bahvyo jāyā bhavanti — IX, 4, 1, 6). The king himself was allowed to have four wives who were called in the Brāhmaṇa as Mahiṣī, Vāvātā, Parivrktā and Pālāgalī (XIII. 4, 1, 8). It has also been described in the Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa that among these four wives the Mahiṣī was the chief queen, Vāvātā was the most favourite queen and Parivrktā was the name given to the neglected or discarded wife of the king (XIII. 2, 6, 4-6); all these three took part in the performance of religious rites. The fourth wife viz. Pālāgalī probably used to come from the lower caste and hence was prohibited to have an access to the religious ceremony. Polygamy however, had not its opposite counter-part in the form of polyandry. The Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa does not show any evidence that just as one man was allowed to have many wives, similarly one wife might have more than one husband.<sup>41</sup> There was also restriction of marriage in the line of blood-

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41. The Aitariya Brāhmaṇa has positively debarred polyandry cf. III. 12, 12.

relationship upto certain degrees. The Śātapatha Brāhmaṇa possibly refers to this restriction when it states that marriage was allowed in the third or fourth generation on either the paternal or maternal side.<sup>42</sup> Exception here proves the general rule that marriage was forbidden within the three or four degrees of the parents.

Intercaste marriage was however, prevalent at this time. Though marriage within the same caste is always laudable, still the Śātapatha Brāhmaṇa does not present us anything which may prove the prohibition of marriage between two different castes. On the other hand it gives positive evidence of intercaste marriage such as, between the Brāhmaṇa sage Cyavana and the Kṣatriya girl Sukanyā who was greatly devoted to her Brāhmaṇa husband.<sup>43</sup> The only thing to be noticed in this connection is that such intercaste marriages in ancient India usually took place between a male of the higher caste and a female of the lower caste. Such types of intercaste marriage have been characterised as anuloma marriage in the later Smṛti works,<sup>44</sup> and the Śātapatha Brāhmaṇa, where it has spoken of the intercaste-marriage, has referred to such anuloma marriage and not vice-versa. Such cases of marriage among the upper three castes were perhaps not looked down upon in the Brāhmaṇas. In respect of marriage of the twice-born person with Sūdra girls however, there seems to exist a

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42. Ś. Br. I. 8, 3, 6.

43. IV. 1, 5, 9.

44. Cf. Goutama Dharma-Sūtra.



general tendency of aversion against the connection between the Aryans and the non-Aryan people. The Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa has not given any definite instance in this respect, but the Aitareya Brāhmaṇa refers to a tradition where Kavaśa Ailūṣa was expelled from the place of sacrifice as he happened to be the son of a Brāhmaṇa father by a Śūdra mother. This is an undeniable evidence that adverse opinion against marriage between a Brāhmaṇa and a Śūdra has already been manifest in society. The Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa however, has once referred to an illicit connection between an Ārya i.e. a man belonging to one of the three higher castes and a Śūdra woman.<sup>45</sup>

The general standard of sexual morality was probably not too low in those days. While describing the procedure of the offering of Varuṇapraghāsa oblation, the Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa<sup>46</sup> mentions one special feature, viz. one of the priests called the Pratiprasthātṛ asks the sacrificer's wife whether she keeps any illicit connection with any person other than her husband. This is done in order to elicit confession of the offence if any for the sake of expiation. This passage however, should not be interpreted to suggest rampant moral lapses. On the other hand it may be taken to reveal keen sense of moral consciousness for the need of expiation in the event of secret adultery. It is also presumed that Varuṇa is a god of ideal moral virtue to whom no transgression

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45. S. Br. XIII. 2, 9, 8 : śūdrā yat āryajāṛā, meaning "Śūdra woman who is the mistress of an Aryan."

46. S. Br. II. 5, 2, 20.

of ṛta or moral order goes beyond his cognisance. We also notice here a trend of leniency towards failings of the weaker sex as against the growing rigorous attitude of the later times, as no serious step was taken against the unfaithful wife; only she had to make confession before all and Yājñavalkya thinks that "a sin when declared becomes less in effect, for it is not attended with falsehood."

(niruktaṁ vā enaḥ kaṇīyo bhavati satyaṁ bhavati- II. 5,2,20.)

Such unfaithful wife was even allowed to take part in the sacred rites as usual.

#### Position of women :

The general picture of the position of women which has been reflected in the Brāhmanas is one of much deterioration as compared with that in the previous age. In almost all primitive societies woman was subordinate to the menfolk and the birth of a female child was never much favoured. In spite of that the R̥gveda shows a spirit of high honour towards the women. This spirit changes for the worse in the subsequent Brāhmanic age side by side with the increasing rigidity of caste-distinction and the predominance of ceremonials. Theoretically woman was still one-half of the husband and a man who had no wife was not entitled to perform sacrifices, but in practice her position was not so glorious. She has been declared as ritually impure : "Woman is the inferior part of the sacrifice; she is ritually impure and must be

covered with a girdle."<sup>47</sup> Not only that, woman as a class has been deemed in this age as embodying untruth.<sup>48</sup> In the Rgvedic age the wife was an equal partner of her husband in all religious ceremonies.<sup>49</sup> But at the time of the Brāhmaṇas she appears to have been displaced, to some extent at least, from this honourable position, as in many of the ceremonies the functions of the sacrificer's wife were performed by the priest.<sup>50</sup> The Śātapatha Brāhmaṇa states that the singing of the Vedic hymns, during the sacrificial session had been originally the function of the wife, but at the time of the Brāhmaṇas it was assigned to the Udgātr̥s (patnī-karmaiva ete atra kurvanti yadudgātārah — XIV. 3, 1, 35). In other words, the significance of the position of the wife became changed in Brāhmaṇic age. The wife was not always 'patnī' (i.e. 'Yajñaphalabhāginī' or sharer of the results of sacrifices), she was sometimes looked upon as 'jāyā' (i.e. progenitor of children for the husband). The following passage from the Śātapatha Brāhmaṇa bears significance in this respect : "Because as long as he has no wife, so long he does not propagate his species, so long he is no complete individual, but when he has a wife, then he propagates his species, then he is complete."<sup>51</sup>

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47. S. Br. I. 3, 1, 12-13.

48. S. Br. XIV. 1, 1, 31.

49. Cf. R.V. I. 83, 3; VIII.31, 6; VII. 91. 1 evinces that ladies could even perform the function of a priest at a sacrifice.

50. S. Br. I. 1, 4, 13.

51. S. Br. V. 2, 1, 10.

In other spheres also woman occupied a degraded position. She has been referred to as the inferior part of the society (I. 3, 1, 9). She was expected to be submissive in her family life and was required to take her meals after her husband (I. 9, 2, 12; X. 5, 2, 9). The women were regarded as the weaker section and they were definitely incapable of inheriting property. The Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa has tried to explain the condition mythologically : "With the thunderbolt, the butter, the gods beat and weakened their wives; and thus beaten and weakened they had no right whatever to their own bodies or to an heritage."<sup>52</sup>

But in spite of such marks of degradation in the general position of women in the Brāhmaṇas, it must be admitted that though their condition was worse than that of the previous age, yet it was never the worst as in the still following period. In fact, the position of women in the Brāhmaṇas was in a transitional stage between the highly honourable and the most deprecating states. This is noticed in many places where the Brāhmaṇa shows inconsistency in its remarks about the position of women. Thus while women were regarded as ritually impure and as having the same status with the Śūdras, and while they were gradually losing their right to take part in the sacrificial performances, they were

~~assessably of such a nature. In the same book Kathaśrautya the wife of~~  
~~Yajñavalkya has expressed her keen desire to attain the highest~~

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52. S. Br. IV. 4, 2, 13.

not completely ousted from their sacred right. In some important rituals they still shared the partnership of their husbands. Thus it has been described in the Brāhmaṇas that in the Vājapeya sacrifice when the sacrificer ascended a ladder resting against the sacrificial stake he had to be accompanied by his wife (V. 2, 1, 10). In the Aśvamedha sacrifice the chief queen (Mahiṣī) of the king took part in anointing the horse and also in some other functions. The chief queen was also included among the eleven Ratnins (Jewels) at whose places the consecrated king had to offer oblations.

Again there seems to exist no aversion to widow-marriage in those days nor there is any positive evidence establishing child-marriage. There is also no explicit mention about the education of women but it may be taken for granted that women were not denied of some kind of education. Some of them even acquired mastery over philosophical studies and speculations. The Brhadāranyaka Upaniṣad which is attached to the Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa gives us the story of Gārgī Vācaknavī who dared to challenge the great sage Yājñavalkya in a vast assembly of scholars. In the same book Maitreyī, the wife of Yājñavalkya has expressed her keen desire to attain the highest knowledge of Brahman and Ātman. The Brhadāranyaka Upaniṣad further gives a statement which shows that not only learned sons but learned daughters also were most coveted still then (atha ya icchet duhitā me paṇḍitā jāyeta .... etc. Br. Up. VI. 4, 17). Besides general education

women got training in music and dance (Ś. Br. III, 2, 4, 6). Their attendance and participation in public meetings, though not positively forbidden, were surely becoming less common in the Brāhmanic period.<sup>53</sup>

On the whole the condition of women was not too bad at this time. The moral standard of conduct seems to be not too high, but not too low also. No doubt there are stray cases of bad remarks about women in the Brāhmaṇa, such as 'women are given to vain things i.e. things which display vanity' (moghasaṁhitā eva yoṣā — III. 2, 4, 6) of 'truly there can be no friendship with women; their hearts are the hearts of hyenas' (na vai straināni sakhyāni, santi sāla-vṛkānāṁ hrdayāni te — XI. 5, 1, 9), there is also remark about female chastity such as "woman when beckoned by a man (for some bad purpose) at first disdains him from the distance."<sup>54</sup> This surely proves the generally high standard of morality in those days.

### Education :

The evolution of the highly elaborate Vedic literature embracing all fields of human knowledge certainly presupposes some well-planned educational system in those days. Even in

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53. This is attested to by a statement in the Maitrāyaṇī Saṁhitā, IV. 7, 4 : tasmād pumāṁsaḥ sabhāṁ yānti na striyaḥ.

54. III. 2, 1, 19 — tasmādu striḥ/puṁsopamantritārka-divaivāgre'sūyati ..... /

the R̥gvedic age which is the earliest, some methods were evolved for learning, teaching and preserving the sacred knowledge. Reciting the text with correct pronounciation as well as understanding its meaning were the two principal methods of Vedic education in the R̥gvedic age. In the later Vedic age, the sacrificial spirit being predominant in every sphere, the trend of educational development became also influenced by it. "Higher education now related itself to the requirements of this priesthood and ritualistic religion. The external, material and mechanical aspects of worship and sacrifice became now the principal subjects of study which in their range and complexity, even called for a considerable degree of specialization and division of labour among its students."<sup>55</sup>

In respect of this new trend of education the Brāhmanas give us the best information. Some of the Brāhmanas describe the Upanayana as a religious ceremony by which one was to be initiated to the Vedic study. It was prescribed for the upper three castes viz. Brāhmana, Ksatriya and Vaisya in order to make them eligible for Vedic study. Ancient Indian society was keen about the proper education of its people and made it formally compulsory for the people of twiceborn community. The Upanayana was thus a prelude to the Aryan studentship which was known as Brahmacarya. The Satapatha Brāhmana thinks that it was like a second birth to the initiated and made them attain true

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55. R.K. Mukherjee, Ancient Indian Education, p. 61.

Brahminhood.<sup>56</sup> Elsewhere also the Brāhmaṇa has described the initiation as well as the stage of brahmacarya as spiritual regeneration : "He is like a divine creature born from his teacher's mouth" (daivyaḥ prajāstāni mukhato janayate tata etanjanayate — XI. 5, 4, 17 ) or "Indeed he attains a new birth who undergoes brahmacarya" (garbho vā esa bhavati yo brahmacaryyamupaiti — XI. 5, 4, 16).

After the Upanayana the student entered the preceptor's residential institution. In ancient India there was no public educational institutions as the modern schools and colleges. All students in those days had to reside with the preceptor<sup>57</sup> and follow his injunctions. The Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa has given a fairly detailed description of the life of studentship in those days in connection with describing the Upanayana as a sacrament. This description generally corroborates with the detailed account of the rites prescribing the norms and duties of student-life in the later Grhya-sūtras. The normal picture of the student-life as revealed through the text of the Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa may be drawn out thus — After the upanayana the student humbly approached the teacher and the teacher, after formally asking his name accepted him as his pupil. The period of student-life was normally twelve years

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56. Ś. Br. XI. 5, 4, 2 : ācāryo garbhī bhavati hastamādhāya dākṣiṇaṁ tṛtīyasyam sa jāyate savitryā saha brāhmaṇa iti /

57. Ś. Br. III. 7, 6, 3.



as evinced from other sacred texts. The Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa has mentioned it as a 'long sacrificial session' (dīrgha-satra).<sup>58</sup> During this long period the student had to attain mastery in the sacred texts; besides this, he had also other vows and duties to discharge. The Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa has dealt in details with the rites and duties of a student after his entrance to the preceptor's residential institution. He had to tend the sacred fires by putting fuels on them. This was regarded very significant since "thereby he kindles his mind with the holy lustre of fire" (samintsvātmānam tejasā brahmavarcasenetyevainam etc. XI. 5, 4, 5). He had to beg alms daily; in the Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa begging is regarded as a religious duty because it conferred on him a proper spirit of humility: "having made himself poor, as it were, and become devoid of shame, he begs alms".<sup>59</sup> Tending the cattle in the house of the preceptor was also included among his daily duties (III. 6, 2, 15). He was forbidden to sleep in the day-time (XI. 5, 4, 5) and had to guard the teacher and his house.

But the principal duty of studentship was no doubt to prosecute the study of the veda. The technical name for Vedic study is 'svādhyāya' or the study of his own branch of the triple scriptures, comprised in the Ṛk, Yajus and Sāman (trayī vidyā — II. 6, 4, 2-7; IV. 6, 7, 1-2;

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58. Ś. Br. XI. 3, 3, 2.

59. Ś. Br. XI. 3, 3, 5 : atha yadātmānam daridrīkṛtyeva / ahrir bhūtvā bhikṣate ..... /

V. 5, 5, 9, etc.). This Svādhyāya or Vedic study was regarded as holy, as the sacrifice and has been called Brahma-yaज्ञा in the Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa.<sup>60</sup> The Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa has eloquently conferred praise upon this sacrifice-like svādhyāya or vedic study.<sup>61</sup> It was an obligatory duty on the part of a student to study the Veda daily : "Verily as if these deities did not move and act, even so will the Brāhmaṇa be on that day on which he does not study his lesson; therefore, one's (daily) lesson should be studied."<sup>62</sup> It has further been stated that he should daily pronounce either a Rk-verse or a Yajus-formula or a Sāman-verse or a Gāthā or a Kumbyā to ensure the unbroken continuity of the Brahma-yaज्ञा.<sup>63</sup> Besides the three Vedas the Brāhmaṇa mentions several other topics or subjects of study such as Anusāsana or precepts,<sup>64</sup> Vidyā or sciences,<sup>65</sup> Vākovākyaṃ (dialogues, most probably

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60. Ś. Br. XI. 5, 6, 3 : Śvādhyāyo vai brahma-yaज्ञाḥ.

61. Ś. Br. XI. 5, 6, 3-9.

62. Ś. Br. XI. 5, 7, 10 : etā devatā neyur na kuryurevaṃ  
haiva tadāhar brāhmaṇo bhavati yadāhaḥ svādhyāyaṃ  
nādhīte tasmāt svādhyāyo' dhyetavyaḥ ..... /

63. Ibid.

64. Sāyana takes by anusāsana the six Vedāṅgas, viz. Phonetics, Ritualistic knowledge, Grammar, Exegetics, Metrics, Astronomy — Commentary on XI. 5, 6, 8.

65. According to Sāyana it means the philosophical systems of Nyāya, Mīmāṃsā etc. Eggeling (SBE. 44, p.98, n.2) however thinks that it may refer to such special sciences as the Sarpavidyā (science of snakes) mentioned in XIII. 4, 3, 9.

some special theological discussion), Itihāsa-purāṇa<sup>66</sup> (traditional myths and legends) and Gāthā-nārāśaṁsī<sup>67</sup> — anūsāsanāni vidyā vākovākyaṁ itihāsa-purāṇaṁ gāthā-nārāśaṁsyah — XI. 5, 6, 8). Besides these particular courses of study, the Śat. Brāhmaṇa incidentally refers to several other sciences or subjects of study, such as vyākhyāna (meaning 'commentary' in VI.1, 27, 33 but signifying simply a 'narrative' in III. 6, 2, 7), Brāhmaṇa or religious explanation (III. 2, 4, 1, probably indicating the title of a class of books mentioned as such), Atharvāṅgirasa (XI. 5, 6, 7), Sarpavidyā (or the science of snakes — XIII. 4, 3, 9), Devajanavidyā (demonology — XIII. 4, 3, 10), Asuravidyā or Māyā (magic tricks — XIII. 4, 3, 11) etc.

After the completion of his study a student became a snātaka. With his final bath in his preceptor's house he became off from his duties of student-life. The Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa enjoins that a student should not beg any more after his final bath — na ha vai snātvā bhikseta (XI. 3, 3, 7). The idea of bathing here symbolises the completion

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66. Sāyaṇa takes by Purāṇa the cosmological myths such as "In the beginning this universe was nothing but water etc. Itihāsa, he thinks means stories of old heroes (purātana-puruṣavṛttānta) like the anecdote of Purūravas and Urvaśī — XIII. 4, 3, 12-13).

67. According to Sāyaṇa these two are the same but there is a different view according to which Gāthās are composed in verses such as "the great snake driven from the lake (XI. 5, 5, 8) while Nārāśaṁsis are accounts of human achievements.

of studentship which is deemed in the Brāhmaṇa as a long sacrificial session. The putting of the first log of wood or samidh on the sacred fire has been regarded as the Prāyaṇīyā iṣṭi on the part of the student; in like manner the last placing of the wood is called the Udayanīyeṣṭi in the Brāhmaṇa.<sup>68</sup> The rite of brahmacarya during the course of religious pupilage is thought to endow a boy a spiritual lustre. Thus states the Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa : "After the final ablution, a student who had observed the vow of brahmacarya shone forth resplendent with the halo of learning and wisdom just as fire blazes forth when fed with fuel."<sup>69</sup>

Mention is also made of teachers who were expected to possess the highest moral and spiritual qualifications. Just as the students were to obey and to attend on the teacher, the teacher also seems to have remained bound to impart knowledge to one who had dwelt with him for one whole year.<sup>70</sup> But the teacher had discretion in this respect; he did not reveal everything indiscriminately<sup>to</sup> his students. Worthiness of the student was perhaps the prime consideration in this matter as it has been revealed in the text: "To one who is known to him, and who has studied sacred writ, and and who may be dear to him, but not to any and every one."<sup>71</sup>

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68. S. Br. XI. 3, 3, 2: yo brahmacaryamupaiti / sa yāmupayan samidhamādhātī sā prāyaṇīyā yāmsnāsyam sā udayanīyā yā antarena satryā evāsyā tā /

69. S. Br. XI. 3, 1, 7.

70. Cf. S. Br. XIV. 1, 1, 27.

71. S. Br. XIV. 1, 2, 26: tasmai brūyādatha yo'nūcāno'tha yo'sya priyaḥ syām na tveva sarvasmā iva /

The teachers of the residential institutions lived married life or as a celibate. They were settled in their own places of residence. But there were also a class of wandering scholars called as carakas in the Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa.<sup>72</sup>

These people roamed from land to land propagating knowledge and culture. These scholars, in course of their travel used to take part in debates and disputes in which the winner earned laurels of distinction. Thus the Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa (XI. 4, 1, 1ff.) records the dispute between Uddālaka Āruni, a Brāhmaṇa coming from Kuru-pāñcāla and Svaidāyana Saunaka, a Brāhmaṇa of the Northern country and the prize offered at this dispute was a gold coin. Ultimately Uddālaka was defeated by Saunaka and became his disciple. From another legend (XI. 6, 2, 1ff.) we know that king Janaka of Videha, came across some travelling Brāhmaṇas and had discussion with them on the Agnihotra in which he offered to give liberal gifts to the victorious. Such type of debates, discussions and conferences became very popular in those days and the Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa has preserved adequate accounts of such academic discourses and disputations. Generally such debates and discourses were held in the royal court under the patronage of a king or on the occasion of grand sacrifices. From the evidence of the Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa we come to know that king Janaka was such a great patron of learning and under his initiative a number

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72. Ś. Br. IV, 2, 4, 1.

of such debates took place between sage Yājñavalkya and Śākalya (XI. 6, 3, ), between Uddālaka Āruṇi and Sauceya Prācīna-yogya (XI. 5, 3, 1), between the teacher Sāṇḍilya and his pupil Sāptarathavāhana.

There was probably no system of paying monthly tuition fees to the preceptors. The students, however, used to pay some dakṣiṇā before they left the preceptor's house. The Śatapatha has once mentioned about the learned śrotriyas who were 'apratigrāhakāḥ' (XIII. 4, 3, 14) i.e. who did not accept fees.

Regarding the system of female education in those days the Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa explicitly mentions nothing. The evidence available from other sources, however, shows that in the Vedic age education was never denied to women. Like the boys, the girls of the higher three castes also were entitled to receive the upanayana sacrament and to study the Vedas.<sup>73</sup> The Vedic texts themselves mention the names of some female scholars whose scholasticism the world

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73. Some later Smṛti-works bear testimony to the fact that Vedic education was no bar for women. Thus it has been stated in the Yama-smṛti — "In the days of yore the maidens were entitled to the investiture with the holy thread or upanayana Saṃskāra; they studied the Vedas and uttered the Sāvitrī-mantra" — purā-kalpe kumārīnām mauñjīvandhanam isyate / adhyāpanaṅca vedānām sāvitrīvacanam tathā //

may boast of.<sup>74</sup> As the sacrificer's wife, the woman had to utter Vedic mantras. This also proves that there was no restriction for women to study the Vedas.

Besides higher education the women of the Vedic age received special training in some fine arts like singing and dancing. Indeed the Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa has stated that the singing of the Sāma-chants in sacrifices was originally the duty of women; later it was entrusted to the male priests called the Udgātṛs — patnī-karmaiva ete atra kurvanti<sup>75</sup> yadudgātārah. Women also cultivated the art of dancing. In a legend in the Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa (III. 2, 4, 6f.) it has been narrated that in a conflict between gods and asuras for winning over the Goddess of Speech, the gods succeeded because they realised that the best way to win over the Goddess of Speech was to sing and dance before her. In this context the Brāhmaṇa has also observed the special attraction of women towards music and dancing by stating that women can be easily won over by one who sings melodiously and dances<sup>76</sup> gracefully before them.

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74. The Rgveda gives us the names of female seers like Ghṛṣā, Apālā, Romasā, Lopāmudrā, Āmbhrī Vāk etc. The Brhadāraṇyaka refers to the glorious challenge made to Yājñavalkya by the female savant Gārgī Vācaknavī and the eternal quest about immortality by the spiritually inspired Maitreyī.

75. S. Br. XIV. 3, 1, 35.

76. S. Br. III. 2, 4, 6 : tasmād ya eva nr̥tyati yo gāyati tasminnevaitā nimislatamā iva /

Food and Drink :

Regarding the items of food and drink commonly used in the society of that age, the Śātapatha Brāhmaṇa gives us ample references. Various estates are mentioned here, some in connection with the gods and some as consumable by men. Both vegetables and non-vegetable foods were eaten up by the Vedic Aryans. Among the vegetable food-stuffs rice seems to be the principal item. Not only boiled rice but various products of rice were also prepared for eating. Thus Dhānā, Karambha, Saktu, Odana, Apūpa etc. are mentioned in the Śātapatha Brāhmaṇa as different products of rice. Rice-gruel or yavāgū as a food is often mentioned and Śātapatha Brāhmaṇa (XII. 7, 2, 9) refers to malted rice (saṣpāṇi) and malted barley (tokmāni). Priyaṅgu (jungle-rice), yava, tila (sesamum), godhuma (wheat), māsa (beans) etc. are also mentioned as varieties of food. Rice, cooked with milk and with beans, has been mentioned in the Śātapatha Brāhmaṇa and the Vājasaneyī Saṃhitā. Various milk-products are referred to in different places such as ājya (melted butter), āmīksā (curdled milk), dadhi (curd), ghr̥ta (unmelted butter), navaṇīta (fresh butter) etc. Sānnāyya (milk and curd mixed together) is mentioned as a special kind of offering to Indra and Agni in the ~~Ṇ~~barsā-pūrṇamāsa sacrifice. The words caru (mixture of milk, curd, honey, butter, etc.) and śrita (boiled milk) are also met with in connection with different performances. Fruits like sacrificial figs (V. 2, 2, 2), plums (V. 5, 4, 10), sugarcane etc. were well-known at the age of the Brāhmaṇas.



Besides vegetable food-stuff the Vedic Aryans of the Brāhmanic age lived upon the meat of animals also. Indeed meat-eating seems to be fairly common in those days. Not only goats, rams or sheep, but horses, buffaloes and even bulls were slaughtered for food. Beef-eating has met disfavour in India in the later age, but in the Vedic period it was quite a normal practice. The Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa has mentioned it as a practice of the day that a large ox or a he-goat was slaughtered when a king or a Brāhmaṇa came to the house as a guest.<sup>77</sup> Yājñavalkya himself, the distinguished theologian of his time, was fond of eating the flesh of milch-cows and bullocks, provided it was tender.<sup>78</sup> It has further been observed in the Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa that among all kinds of eatables 'flesh or meat is the best kind of food' (etadu paramamānādyam yanmāmsam — XI. 7, 2, 1). Its use was however, forbidden during the observance of a vow.

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77. Ś. Br. III. 4, 1, 2.

78. Ś. Br. III. 1, 2, 21. We must add here that though beef-eating was permissible on special occasions, yet there always a decided tendency against the slaying of cows. The epithet 'aghnyā' (not to be killed) used for the cow even in the R.V. (V. 83, 8) may prove this. In the Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa (III. 1, 2, 21) also we find a long discourse on the non-slaughtering of cows and we find the injunction "let him not eat the flesh of the cow or the ox for the cow and the ox doubtless support everything on earth" — sa dhenvai cāṇḍuhasca nāśnīyaddhenavanaduḥau vā idam sarvaṁ bibhṛtaḥ /

Among the drinks, milk was certainly the best. The huge number of milk-products and their mixture mentioned in the Brāhmanas evidently shows the popularity of milk as a drink. Besides the usual drinks like water, milk, honey, fruit-juice, we often find mention of Soma and Surā, both intoxicating spirituous liquors. Soma was a very well-known creeper in the Vedic India. It was pressed with stones and the juice obtained from it formed a favourite drink of the Aryans. Most probably it was an exhilarating drink and the Aryans were so much addicted to it that they raised it to the dignity of a god. The immense varieties of the Soma-sacrifice in which Soma-juice was offered show the ceremonial importance of Soma. Surā, on the other hand, seems to be a lower kind of drink in comparison with soma. According to the Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa surā was prepared from oṣadhi (herbs that wither away after producing fruits) and water mixed together.<sup>79</sup> It was not a drink for divine consumption and was not offered in any sacrifice except in the Sautrāmanī. The Sautrāmanī sacrifice, itself reveals the nature of being an expiatory rite for too much addiction to surā. The Śat. Brāhmaṇa has openly expressed its preference of Soma to Surā: "Soma is truth, prosperity and light; Surā is untruth, misery or vice and darkness."<sup>80</sup> Elsewhere the bad effects of drinking surā has been emphasized: "By drinking surā one becomes

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79. Ś. Br. XII. 8, 1, 4 : apāṃ ca vā eṣa oṣadhīnām ca raso yat surā /

80. Ś. Br. V. 1, 2, 10 : satyaṃ śrīr jyotiḥ somaḥ anṛtaṃ pāpmā tamaḥ surā /

violent in temper" (surām pītvā raudramanā — XII. 7, 3, 20). The Brāhmaṇa-text has also forbidden a Brāhmaṇa to drink surā, since it is unpropitious for him. Another kind of liquor called Parisrut, which is neither Soma nor Surā is referred to in the Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa.<sup>81</sup> It was prepared from the fermentation of grains and herbs. It was also a drink of lower quality and the Brāhmaṇas were forbidden to drink it (anādyam vai brāhmaṇena parisrut - XII. 9, 1, 1).

There was no hard and fast rule for taking or not taking any item of food, but we notice an interesting observation in the Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa regarding the quantity of food to be taken. It has been stated there — "Food which is proportionate to the body satisfies and does not injure it; but when there is too much, it does injure it, and when there is too little, it does not satisfy."<sup>82</sup>

#### Dress and Decorations :

Different kinds of dress made of wool, cotton and silk were well-known in the later Vedic age. Sewing and knitting are often referred to in the Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa. Women were particularly engaged in these tasks. "It is the duty of women to knit and sew or stitch" says the Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa (XII. 7, 2, 11 : tad vā etat strīnām karma yad

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81. S. Br. XII. 8, 1, 5.

82. S. Br. X. 4, 1, 4: yaḍu vā ātmasammitamannaṁ tadavati tanna hinasti, yaḍ bhūyo hinasti tad yat kaṇīyo na tadavati /

ūrṇāsūtram karma). The term 'sūtra' here evidently means cotton; 'ūrṇā' in the sense of 'wool' is used in the Ṛgveda also.<sup>83</sup> The general dress of the Indians in the age of the Brāhmanas seems to consist of three garments — main garment covering the body called Vāsa, an over-garment called Adhivāsa and an under-garment called Nīvi (I. 3, 3, 6). The first two garments are often mentioned in the Ṛgveda, but the third garment seems to have come into use in the later Vedic age.<sup>84</sup> The description given in the Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa of the sacrificial garments which were worn by a king at the ceremony of his consecration, corresponds with the general dress though the names used are different. Thus the king had to wear a Tārpya which is explained as a 'silken under-garment';<sup>85</sup> secondly, a garment of undyed wool and thirdly a mantle which is presumably an over-garment. The Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa mentions also a turban (uṣṇīṣa)<sup>86</sup> or head-dress as a part of the kingly dress. It seems that even queens had to put on turbans. The Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa refers to a divine instance that Indra's queen Indrāṇī had a most variegated head-band.<sup>87</sup> The last item i.e. the wearing

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83. Cf. R.V. IV. 22, 2. Ūrṇā is the wool made from sheep's hair and that is why the sheep has been called 'woolly' (ūrṇāvatī) in the R.V.VIII. 56, 3. The term ūrṇāsūtram has been explained as 'woolen thread' in the Vedic Index, I, p. 106.

84. Cf. R.G. Majumdar, Ancient India, p. 47.

85. A.A.Macdonell and A.B.Keith, Vedic Index, II, p. 292.

86. S. Br. V. 3, 5, 20-22.

87. S. Br. XIV. 2, 1, 8.

of the head-dress was perhaps not the usual practice in those days. The Brāhmaṇa may have mentioned it only as a ritualistic details. Mention is also made of skirt of Kuśa grass which was worn by the wife of the sacrificer at the ceremony of the consecration. But there is no other evidence to show that this dress was normally worn by women. The usual dress for the sages and the Brahmacārins seems to be garments made of the skin of black antelopes (kṛṣṇājina). Kṛṣṇājina itself is also frequently mentioned in the Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa for its ritual use.

From the evidence of the Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa, it, however, appears that the vedic people had a taste for good dress. They appreciated the perfection in the outward appearance of a well-dressed person: "Garment is man's outward appearance, whence people on seeing a well-clad man asks 'who can this be' ? For he is perfect in his outward appearance."<sup>88</sup> The Vedic Indians were also fond of clothes with fine embroidery as it appears from the evidence of other vedic texts. The Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa mentions about cushions for seats embroidered with gold threads (XIII.4,3,1).

The Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa mentions also about gold and silver ornaments.<sup>89</sup> Of these the gold ornaments were evidently used by the noble class (ksatrasya etad rūpaṁ yad

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88. Ś. Br. XIII. 4, 1, 15 : rūpaṁ vā etat puruṣasya yad  
vāsastasmād yameva kañca suvāsasam<sup>h</sup>uh ko'nvayamiti  
rūpasamrddho hi bhavati /

89. Ś. Br. XII. 8, 3, 11.

hiranyam — XIII. 2, 2, 18). The four wives of the king are described as decorated in gold necklaces (XIII. 4, 1, 8). The Vedic Indians attained skill in stone- and pearl-jewellery also. The mention of a pearl necklace, made of hundred and one pearls proves it almost certainly (XIII. 2, 6, 8). The oiling and combing of hair on the part of men and braiding of hair on the part of women were in vogue. The R̥gveda even attests to this.

### Economic Condition

#### Occupations:

During the later Vedic period we come across various occupations and professions prevalent among people of all classes. Generally the people belonging to the four castes had to perform four different types of occupations. The Brāhmanas or the priestly class had the profession of teaching and officiating as priests in the performance of sacrifices. Also it was they who acted as the minister and adviser to the king. The Kṣatriyas were the ruling class and as such all that concerns the administration such as maintaining law and order, protecting the people in all spheres and fighting with the enemies fell to the lot of the Kṣatriyas. Agricultural, pastoral and commercial pursuits upon which depended the economy of the society, were the business of the Vaiśyas and the Sūdras were entrusted with the task of serving the upper three classes.

Besides this general division of occupations in accordance with the four castes, we may also mention various special occupations from the evidence of the text of the Śātapatha Brāhmaṇa. Various types of industries grew up at that time and this shows that the Vedic Aryans attained much proficiency in arts and crafts at such a hoary antiquity. In the Vājasaneyī Saṁhitā (XXX. 5-22) we get a fairly long list of victims of the Puruṣamedha sacrifice along with their occupations. The existence of so many occupations at such an age of antiquity is really wonderful and reveals the state of things prevalent in the later Vedic society. The Śātapatha Brāhmaṇa has also occasionally referred to most of these occupations. We find here mention of Carpenters (takṣā), Chariot-wrights (rathakāras), Charioteers (samgrahitr), Court-ministrel (sūta), Keepers of the dive (akṣāvāpa) and the Huntsman (govikartana). These professions were no less honourable in the society. The representatives of all the last four classes used to attend even the coronation ceremony of the king.<sup>90</sup> Brick-making (VI. 2, 1, 9) seems to have been a good industry in those days, since large number of bricks was necessary for building colossal sacrificial altars. The construction of altars in different shapes and sizes evidently involved knowledge of architecture. The mention of gold mansion (XIII. 5, 1, 11) or castles made of stone (III. 1, 3, 11) definitely indicate the existence of expert <sup>masons</sup> ~~masons~~.

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90. S. Br. V. 3, 1, 1 ff.

The Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa (XI. 8, 1, 1) also refers to potters (kulāla) and perhaps to rope-makers who used to prepare ropes from the bark of a tree known as 'Rajjudāla' (XIII. 4, 4, 5). The Vedic people knew the use of the metals like gold, silver, iron, lead and copper and many useful industries came into existence. Gold and silver ornaments mentioned in the Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa (XII. 8, 3, 11) prove the existence of the profession of goldsmiths. Not only gold ornaments, gold bricks and gold plates were also made and frequently used particularly in sacrifices. The tanner's art also seems to be alluded to when the Brāhmaṇa mentions the leather-bag (kumbhī bhastrā — I. 1, 2, 7). Medical practice was surely an important profession and the terms bhiṣak and bheṣaj are frequently used in the Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa. Even the gods are said to have the twin gods Asvins as their physicians — aśvinau vai devānāṃ bhiṣajau (XII. 7, 2, 3). Some professions like weaving, knitting, sewing, embroidery and plaiting of mats seem to have been confined among women. Dancing and singing were largely practised by both men and women. Though it is difficult to say definitely whether these two were the principal means of livelihood, yet singing at least seems to have been the profession of some people. At the performance of some sacrifices singing of chants was a compulsory function. The Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa (XIII. 4, 2, 8) mentions a Brāhmaṇa lute-player, singing three strophes composed by himself at the Asvamedha sacrifice.



Agriculture :

The life of the Vedic Aryans in the Brāhmanic age was that of a fairly settled tribe and agriculture attained wide popularity among them. Even the R̥gvedic evidence seems to be almost conclusive that ~~by~~ the time of the earliest hymns of the R̥gveda, agriculture was one of the main professions of the Vedic people. In the later Vedic period agriculture was still as popular as before and references from the Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa are sufficient to show the high importance attached to kṛṣi or ploughing in those days. Thus according to the Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa 'agriculture is verily food'.<sup>91</sup> The methods of agriculture became much improved in this age and the Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa has mentioned a team of six or twelve or even twenty-four oxen to drag the plough.<sup>92</sup> The Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa has elsewhere neatly summed up the gradual operations of agriculture as "ploughing, sowing, reaping and threshing."<sup>93</sup> In connection with describing the process of preparing the site of the Great Altar, the Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa has described some methods of cultivation (VII. 2, 2, 5f.). First the oxen were yoked to the ploughs and after the furrow was made, seeds were thrown there. The Brāhmaṇa stresses upon the proper ploughing of fields, for "if one casts seed into unploughed ground, it is just as if

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91. annam vai kṛṣiḥ — S. Br. VII. 2, 2, 6.

92. S. Br. VII. 2, 2, 6; VIII. 6, 2, 2.

93. S. Br. I. 6, 1, 3: yāmeṣāmetāmanuśṛṇvanti kṛṣanto ha smaiva pūrve vapanto yanti lunanto'pare mr̥ṇantaḥ śasva-dḍhaibhyo' kṛṣṭa-paṇcyā evauśadhayaḥ pecire /

one were to shed seed elsewhere than into the womb."<sup>94</sup> Proper ploughing and proper sowing made a rich harvest and "when the food gets ripe, people approach it with the sickle."<sup>95</sup> There was evidently some sort of irrigation as evinced from other sources; but the Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa mentions cow-dung (karīṣa) used as manure to the land in order to make fertile: "cow-dung surcharges the earth with sap; hence cow-dung is collected".<sup>96</sup>

Though various corns were cultivated in the Vedic age, yet rice which was the chief food of the Aryans in the later Vedic age was also the main item of cultivation. This seems to be the reason why the Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa refers to the autumn season as the season when corn ripens.<sup>97</sup> Corn here certainly means paddy because it is paddy which ripens in autumn.

The importance of agriculture naturally increased the importance of bullocks and cows. Indeed the Vedic Aryans

94. S. Br. VII. 2, 2, 5 : ayonau retah siñcedevaṃ tad yadakṛṣṭe vapati . . . . /

95. Ibid : yadā vāṇnam pacyate' tha tat sṛṇyopacaranti . . . . /

96. S. Br. II. 1, 1, 7 : tadāśya evainametat pṛthivyai rasena samardhayati, tasmādā-khukarīṣaṃ sambharati purīṣya iti /

97. S. Br. XI. 2, 7, 32 : śarad brahmā tasmād yadā śasyaṃ pacyate.

were still in their pastoral stage and hence bullocks, cows and other domestic animals were regarded as their chief<sup>98</sup> wealth.

### Trade and Commerce :

As we have seen, agriculture was the chief source of economy, but trade and commerce were also gradually growing in the later Vedic age. The word 'vanik' in the sense of a merchant is found in the list of victims at the Purusamedha. Agriculture being the main basis of economic life, other needs were met with by a sort of commercial enterprise. There were surely certain standards and measures of exchange. The word<sup>99</sup> 'tulā' meaning balance has been used in the Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa in connection with the weighing of a man's good and evil deeds. There was probably no regular system of coinage or currency. Barter system was prevalent in ancient India as in other ancient countries. Cows seem to be the main medium of barter. The Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa records the purchasing of Soma in exchange for an one-year old milch cow.<sup>100</sup> The word niṣka which probably originally denoted a gold ornament worn on the neck<sup>101</sup>, has been used also to denote a 'gold coin'.<sup>102</sup> The

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98. Cf. paśavo vasu / III. 7, 3, 13; puṣṭihpaśavah / III. 1, 4, 14; paśavo vai mahah / XI. 8, 1, 3.

99. XI. 2, 7, 33.

100. Ś. Br. III. 3, 3, 4.

101. Ś. Br. XIII. 4, 1, 7.

102. Ś. Br. XI. 4, 1, 8.

business of money-lending was probably well known, since the Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa mentions the word kusīdin as a designation of the 'userer'.<sup>103</sup> As regards the standard of measurement of weight the Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa mentions 'Śatamāna'<sup>104</sup> which has been explained as equivalent in weight to a hundred kṛṣṇālas, one kṛṣṇāla being a unit of weight. The Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa further bears evidence that during the later Vedic period there was an established trade transaction between different localities of the country. At Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa (XI. 5, 5, 12) we get reference to horses as 'saindhavas' or coming from the Indus region.

As regards maritime trade we get no definite evidence. It is true that the word 'samudra' has been frequently used even in the R̥gveda and though in the R̥gveda<sup>105</sup> the word is mostly metaphorically used, yet there are instances in the later texts where the word probably means 'the sea'. The Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa refers to the eastern and western oceans;<sup>106</sup> though the reference is metaphorically given, yet it probably shows the acquaintance of the Vedic Indians with both seas, the Indian Ocean and the Arabian Sea. References to boats and ships also prove maritime activity in those days.<sup>107</sup> All these may however, prove the awareness of the people of the later vedic period, of the existence of the sea, but nothing more definitely.

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103. S. Br. XIII. 4, 3, 11: kusīdina upasametā bhavanti /

104. S. Br. XII. 7, 2, 13; XII. 4, 1, 6.

105. R̥. V. VII. 6, 7; X. 98, 5; X. 136, 5.

106. S. Br. I. 6, 3, 11.

107. S. Br. I. 8, 1, 4; IV. 2, 5, 10 etc.

## CHAPTER V

### Cultural Condition

In the history of ancient Indian thought the R̥gveda is undoubtedly the fountain-head; it is the source and repository of all religious thought and philosophical ideas, of social and moral ethics with their underlined inner spirit which makes our civilization essentially Indian. The Brāhmaṇas which are primarily the guide-books for the complex sacrificial rituals are also testifier to the cultural heritage of the age of comparable antiquity.

Culture, as we know, is a complex trend of mind and a disposition of a race or a group of people as a whole, which characterises its manifestations in the sphere of civilization and its achievement. It comprises manifold aspects of national life regulated by the traditions of norms, beliefs and manners.<sup>1</sup> Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru in his 'Discovery of India' has finely brought out the relation between culture and civilization in the following ~~line~~<sup>strain that</sup> — "Culture develops into a rich civilization flowering out in philosophy, literature, drama, art, science and mathematics."<sup>2</sup>

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1. Culture has been defined by a writer as "we may think of culture in terms of literature or art or social philosophy or science or morality or religious scrupulosity. We may think of as a way of living or a standard of behaviour or the ideal implicit in the conduct required in the relationship between citizen and citizen, man and man, state and state." Editor, Britain To-day, No. 4.
  2. Jawaharlal Nehru, 'The Discovery of India', 1956, p~~ages~~ 215

In the light of this, the culture as indicated in the age of the Brāhmanic literature comprises the traits of behaviour and ways of life in social context as well as the religious, intellectual and philosophical pursuits, including the growth of art, literature and other sciences. The course of this cultural evolution, marked out by the peculiar physical and mental characteristics of the people, went on through different phases from its inception in the previous R̥gvedic times till it culminates with sustained vigour in the wonderful phase of philosophy in the Upaniṣads. In other words, the culture as reflected through the Brāhmaṇa literature does not mark the starting point of a civilization. On the contrary, the Brāhmaṇa literature bears the mark of transitional expansion of the cultural traits of a great civilization in different aspects representing the growing complex of the phenomena. The Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa, being of comparatively later period shows this transitional spirit more distinctly than others.

However, the progress and development of a nation in all its aspects at some period of history naturally points to the high intellect of the people of that time. We have already seen that in the Brāhmanic period the Vedic Aryans had reached a high state of civilization. They were settled to a life of well-organized social order. Their family-life was conducive to happiness and religious practices. They were a joyous people, who always had a healthy outlook on life. They considered the world to be a good place to live in and

prayed to the gods in order to attain a better life. Indeed, there was no tinge of pessimism in the outlook of the vedic people. Caste-system was established then. But though there was a sort of gradation among people in the civic life of the nation, yet it had no bitter effect upon the inter-relation of people in the society. It seems to have been more or less based on occupations and contributed to the smooth running of the social discipline. The vedic study formed an essential part in the scheme of education and the importance of such study has been stressed to a great extent in the Brāhmanas. The more or less honourable position of women in the society also reflects the high standard of vedic civilization and culture. Not only in social status, in intellectual capacity also, the women of the Brāhmanic age showed their efficiency. The Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa, however, tends to indicate certain growing restrictions to the comparative freedom which they enjoyed previously but there is not the least doubt that their position was on the whole considerably high, and the high level of learning and the superior mental equipment which the women of that age possessed, may demand high praise even from the modern world.

Side by side with the establishment of social discipline, we also find some political principles well-formulated during this period. No doubt, monarchy was the prevailing system of government in the Vedic society, yet it was never an absolute monarchy. It is significant that in the Brāhmanas,

we sometimes find a spirit of enquiry into the origin of kingship and copious instances may be found there to illustrate the beginnings of some forms of government. The origin of kingship there has been explained by the theories of general selection or election so to say, or of divine creation. The Śātapatha Brāhmaṇa has not mentioned any definite theory regarding the origin of kingship, but it has once suggested the situation when people feel need for a king: "whenever there is drought, then the stronger seizes upon the weaker, for the waters are the law."<sup>3</sup> At such time of emergency, people selected a person as a king by common consent, who might establish law and order in the society. This theory sometimes appears with a theological garb in the Brāhmaṇas where the sacerdotal atmosphere makes Prajāpati the Supreme Creator of all, including the king. This theory of the ancient thinkers reminds one of Social Contract Theory<sup>4</sup> propounded by Prof. Locke in the eighteenth century. Historically, however, as all references show, kingship was hereditary in ancient times. The Śātapatha Brāhmaṇa narrates an anecdote in which is mentioned one Śrñjaya king called Duṣṭarītu Paumsāyana who has been said to inherit his kingdom through

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3. S. Br. XI. 1, 6, 24: yadāvṛṣṭir bhavati balīyāneva tarhya  
balīyasa ādatte dharmo hyāpah /

4. John Locke, Two Treatises of Civil Government.



ten continuous generations.<sup>5</sup> The king's ascending to the throne was not only a political affair, it was associated with a ritual in the Brāhmaṇa text viz. the Rājasūya. The sovereign who was formally chosen by the nobles or people at the Rājasūya sacrifice as the lord of the people, was termed the Rājā. The high position of the king has been declared in the Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa as "Nothing is above the power of the king" (XIV. 4, 2, 23).

). "Kings are the upholders of states; they maintain or protect the kingdom." (rājāno vai rāṣṭrabhṛtaste hi rāṣṭrāṇi bibhṛati — IX. 4, 1, 1). The supreme majesty of the king over all has been further emphasized in the statement that "the king becomes not only exempt from punishment but also the lord of the law."<sup>6</sup> But in spite of such extra-ordinary prerogatives accorded to the king, the monarchy in those days was not absolute in the strict sense of the term. The power of the king was limited by the will or consent of the people. Even at the time of his inauguration the king ascended the throne with the consent of the different representatives of the nobility and the common people. These representatives were called Rājakṛtaḥ i.e. king-makers, since they had an express voice in choosing the king. It was they who formed the cabinet of the king and gave counsel

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5. S. Br. XII. 9, 3, 3.

6. S. Br., V. 3, 3, 9: paramatā vai sa yo dharmasya patir  
sadyo hi paramatām gacchati tam hi dharma upayanti  
..... etc.

to the king in running the administration. The king's power was also controlled by the Sabhā or the popular assembly. The Śātapatha Brāhmaṇa states that subsidiary and friendly kings also used to attend the Sabhā convened by a king and participated in the deliberations. According to ~~the~~ Dr. Mukherjee — "The Sabhā functioned as a parliament for the disposal of public business by debate and discussion."<sup>7</sup>

Thus we may conclude that the type of monarchy prevailing in the later vedic period was theoretically absolute, but practically it was a limited monarchy. The fundamental principle that the foundation of a kingdom rests on the goodwill of the subjects was recognised in the ancient political thought of India. "It is through the people that the nobility (i.e. the king) becomes strong", observes the Śātapatha Brāhmaṇa.<sup>8</sup> It has been stated more clearly in the Śātapatha Brāhmaṇa (XII. 7, 3, 8) that "it is the people that creates the nobility; the nobility is produced from out of the people or subjects."<sup>9</sup> Yet, in the actual state of things there sometimes seems to have existed some kind of malevolent despotism when people became tortured by the ruler. There are passages in the Śātapatha Brāhmaṇa which may be taken as referring to such state of things: "The wielder of royal power feeds on the people; state is the eater and the people

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7. R.K. Mukherjee, Hindu Civilisation, Chapter V. ■

8. Ś. Br., IV. 3, 3, 6: viśā vai kṣatriyo valavān bhavati.

9. Viśa eva tat kṣatram janayati, viśo hi kṣatram jāyate /

are the food; state is the deer, people are the barley."<sup>10</sup>

Again — "Royal power indeed, presses hard on the people; the king is apt to strike down people."<sup>11</sup> Too much maltreatment of the subjects sometimes led to popular agitation resulting finally even in the dethronement of the king and expulsion from his kingdom. The Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa contains record that the Śrñjayas expelled their king Duṣṭarītu Paumsāyana, though he inherited the kingdom after ten generations of royal descent.<sup>12</sup>

Kingship in the vedic age was generally the reserve of the Kṣatriyas with a very few exceptions. But the Brāhmaṇas or the priestly class with their superior proficiency in learning, were the spiritual guides of the society and virtually controlled all political affairs also. But there was probably no major conflict between these two sections to acquire the commanding power.

Along with its high standard of social order or political discipline, Brāhmaṇic age is marked with a high level of contemplation on rituals as well as philosophy. Ritualism indeed attained its height in the Brāhmaṇas. Sacrifice has been conceived to be all-yielding power connected with the

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10. Ś. Br., XIII. 2, 9, 8: viḍ vai yavo rāṣṭraṁ harīṇo  
viśameva rāṣṭrānyādyāṁ karoti tasmāt rāṣṭrī viśamatti/

11. Ś. Br. XIII. 2, 9, 6: rāṣṭraṁveva viśi āhanti tasmād  
rāṣṭrī viśam ghātukaḥ /

12. Ś. Br., XII. 9, 3, 3.

prospect of even heavenly bliss. The essence of cosmic process is sought to be interpreted in terms of sacrifice. Such mysterious dominance of the cult of sacrifice as a phase of practical religion, is a result of teaching and speculation of the Brāhmanic literature. By now, there have been certain changes in the old vedic pantheon as a result of which gods like Viṣṇu, Rudra or Prajāpati etc. grew into prominence, while female goddesses originally connected with natural phenomena dwindled in importance. The overwhelming importance of the sacrifice again threw the gods into a sort of subordinate position and they came to be connected as but accessories to the sacrificial performance. Instead of the frank devotional attitude of the worshippers to the gods as objects of reverence, as we find in the R̥gveda, the sacrifice is held fast to in the Brāhmanas as of tremendous power to motivate the will of the gods to the needs of humanity as a matter of course. The question of devotion to gods as such is, however, not of importance. On the other hand, it is the mechanical performance of the sacrifice with meticulous care is what counts as an aspect of religion.

The growing dominance of ritualism again led to the development of a learned class of people adept in Vedic lore who formed the priestly aristocracy in particular. Undoubtedly, they enjoyed high privileges and prerogatives in society.

But though the prime concern of the Brāhmanas was to

set forth the sacrifice, yet they were not completely bereft of philosophical ideas. It is true that they did not propagate any special kind of philosophy; but they were not also antagonistic to philosophy. The trend of philosophical speculation which we notice even in the earliest literature of the RV. was uninterruptedly on its move in spite of the dogmatism of the Brāhmaṇas till it reached its culmination in the Upaniṣads. Traditionally also, the Upaniṣads are regarded as forming parts of the Brāhmaṇas. The Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa actually has Brhadāranyakopaniṣad as its concluding chapter.

But since sacrificial ritual is the main theme of these texts, spiritual philosophy rarely looks large. Yet the glimpses of true knowledge flashing forth here and there throughout the sacrificial paraphernalia are sufficient to reveal the philosophic trend of mind even though the rigidity of formalism in the age of the Brāhmaṇas. The Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa in particular refers to scepticism or unbelief about sacrifice though ultimately it asserts the holiness of the act of sacrifice by reference to a legend.<sup>13</sup>

Side by side with the prominence of different gods in different sacrifices, the old monotheistic tendency is stressed more than once in the Brāhmaṇa through the identification of the different divinities with each other. The

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13. Ś. Br. I. 2, 5, 24-26.

Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa also touches upon Brahman in the sense of unqualified Absolute Reality. The gradual development in the meaning of the term Brahman from 'speech', 'prayer' or 'Veda' to the unqualified Absolute Reality is really interesting as well as important in the history of Vedic religion. The Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa conception of Brahman is generally that of the great creator — the creator of the gods. Not only that, the whole phenomenal world consisting of different names and forms has been evolved from and governed by the Brāhmaṇas.<sup>14</sup> The evolution of this universal source from the personal to the impersonal is clearly noticeable in the Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa when it states — "The Great Brahman is One and Imperishable verily, all gods, all beings finally pass in-  
to that Imperishable Supreme Being."<sup>15</sup> This Brahman or the Universal Spirit is also identified with Ātman or the individual soul in the later Brāhmaṇas. In the Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa the term 'Ātmā', is used in the usual sense of 'self'. A passage in the Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa finely brings out the nature of Ātman, the individual self and identifies it with Brahman, the Universal Soul : "Let him meditate on the Self, Ātman, which is made of intelligence and endowed with a body of spirit, with a form of light, and with an ethereal nature, which changes its shape at will, is swift as thought, of true

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14. Ś. Br., XI. 2, 3, 1.

15. Ś. Br., X. 4, 1, 9 : mahad brahmaikam~~am~~akṣaram bahu  
brahmaikam~~am~~akṣaramityetaḍ dhyevākṣaram sarve devāḥ  
sarvāṇi bhūtānyav~~am~~bhisampadyante ..... etc.

resolve and true purpose, which consists of all sweet colours and tastes, which holds sway over all the regions and pervades this whole creation, which is speechless and indifferent — even as a grain of rice or a grain of barley, or a grain of millet or the smallest granule of millet, so is this golden Puruṣa in the heart; even as a smokeless steady column of light, it is greater than the sky, greater than the ether, greater than all existing things; that self of the spirit is my self; on passing away from this world, I shall obtain that self."<sup>16</sup> The Vedic seer who attempted to grasp the nature and relation of the spirit of man as well as the spirit of the universe, realised also that this Absolute Supreme Soul can be attained not through sacrifice, but through knowledge alone.<sup>17</sup> Thus even in an atmosphere of ritual rigidity in the Brāhmanical age, the Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa definitely had a philosophical background and it undoubtedly traces the beginning of the Upaniṣadic philosophy of knowledge. "It must

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16. S. Br. X. 6, 3, 2: sa ātmānamupāsīta / manomayaṁ prāṇa-  
 śarīraṁ bhāruṇa-mākāśātmānam kāmarūpinam manojavasam  
 satyasankalpaṁ satyadhṛtiṁ sarvagandham sarvarasaṁ  
 sarvā anu diśaḥ prabhūtaṁ sarvamidaṁ abhyāptamavākamanā-  
 daram yathā vrīhir vā yavo vā śyāmāko vā śyāmāka-  
 taṇḍulo vaivamayamantarātman puruṣo hiraṇmayo yathā  
 jyotiradhūmamevaṁ jyāyān divo jyāyānākāśāḥ jyāyāna-  
 syai prthivyai jyāyantsarvebhyo bhūtebhyah sa prāṇa-  
 syāt-maiṣa ma'ātmaitamita ātmānam pretyā-bhisambhaviṣya-  
 miti ..... /

17. S. Br., X. 5, 4, 16.

always be remembered that the Brāhmanas contain already in germ all the ideas which make up the fundamental doctrine of the Upaniṣads", says Prof. Keith.<sup>18</sup>

The beginnings of the later Indian philosophical systems also are to be traced in some of the Brāhmanas. In a cosmogonic legend in the Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa which describes the process of creation beginning from the Mind we get the foreshadowing of the Sāṅkhya system of cosmic Mind.<sup>19</sup> The Brāhmanic philosophy also includes the principles of the later Pūrvaśāstra system. In general, we notice in the Brāhmaṇa-texts a logical way of setting forth and discussing a matter. In course of such discussions, technical points are raised on which different opinions are examined with arguments. Sometimes such opinions are rejected, sometimes two different views are accepted as two alternatives, adducing arguments on both sides. In such arguments and counter-arguments in the Brāhmanas we can easily discern the beginning of the mode of interpretative investigation or discretion as pursued in later philosophy in the form of Adhikaraṇa in general and particularly in Mīmāṃsā. The conception of life after death and its recognition are also significant in the Brāhmanas. In the Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa man is said to be born thrice: the first time he is born of his parents; secondly, he is born on his initiation to sacrificial rites; and thirdly,

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18. Aitareya Āraṇyaka, p.257, Note 10.

19. S. Br. X. 5, 3, 1 ff.



after physical death, he is born anew in the next world.<sup>20</sup>  
 Thus according to the notion prevailing in the Brāhmaṇas, man's physical death leads<sup>to</sup> a new birth in the next world where he undergoes the results of his deeds. This has been repeatedly suggested in the Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa: "A man is born into the world which he has made" (Ḳṛtāmlokaṃ puruṣo'-bhijāyate — VI. 2, 2, 27), "Whatever food a man eats in this world by that food he is eaten in the next world" (sa yaddha vā asmin loke puruṣo'nnam atti tad enam amasmin, etc. XII. 9, 1, 1).

Reference is also made to the weighing of a man's merits and demerits after his expiry: "Verily, they place him on the balance in yonder world, i.e. the other world; and whichever of the two will rise, he will follow whether it be the good or the evil."<sup>21</sup> If his acts of piety outweigh his evil deeds, he enjoys immortality in the world of the gods i.e. the heaven: "Those who perform the act (of piety) are reborn after death; in this rebirth they attain immortality" (ye vai-tat karma kurvate mṛtvā punaḥ sambhavanti te / (- ~~etānāṃ~~) sambhavanta evāmṛtatvamabhisambhavanti / X.4,3,10)

Some description of hell also has been reflected in the episode

20. S'. Br. XI. 2, 1, 1: tairha vai puruṣo jāyate / etannveva mātuścādhi pituś cāgre jāyate'tha yaṃ yajña upanamati sa yad yajate tad dvitīyaṃ jāyate'tha yatra mriyate yatrainamagnāvabhyādadhāti sa yat tataḥ sambhavati tat tṛtīyaṃ jāyate tasmāt triḥ puruṣo jāyate ityāhuḥ /

21. S'. Br. XI. 2, 7, 33: tulāyāṃ ha vā amuṣmīṃ loka'ādadhāti yatarad yaṃsyati tadnveṣyati yadī sādhu vāsādhu vā ----- etc.

of Bhr̥gu, the son of Varuna.<sup>22</sup> Doctrine of birth seems to be hinted at by the statement — "After death a man is born again and again" (mṛtvā punaḥ sambharanti — X. 4, 3, 10). The Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa contemplates a condition of soul in which it becomes free from all desires. Such state is beyond the reach of sacrificial gifts or rigorous abstention; by knowledge alone man can descend to that state.<sup>23</sup> Such spiritual reflection definitely forestalls the advent of the Upaniṣadic philosophy.

Not only philosophical, the Brāhmaṇas definitely had an ethical background too. Though scholars like Winternitz hold that the Brāhmaṇas contain "infinitely less morality which in reality amounts to no morality at all", yet it is now definitely established that the Brāhmaṇas are not totally devoid of morality. Particularly, the Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa reflects althrough a high moral sense and exalted sentiment. Life is looked upon here as a course of duty and responsibility. Man is said to have been born with some debts or ṛṇas which he should discharge throughout his life. These are the debts to the gods, to the ṛṣis, to the manes and to his fellowmen.<sup>24</sup> The R̥gvedic conception of R̥ta or the Universal law of eternal truth which furnished the highest standard of morality has

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22. S. Br. XI. 6, 1, 1-13.

23. S. Br. X. 5, 4, 16.

24. S. Br. I. 7, 2, 1: ṛṇaṁ ha vai jāyate yo'sti / sa jāyamāna eva devebhya ṛṣibhyaḥ pitṛbhyo manuṣyebhyaḥ /

lost its original connotation. It has become almost synonymous with yajña or sacrifice, probably on the ground that sacrifice also, when duly performed, inevitably brings out the desired result. But in spite of such limitation of the notion of Ṛta in the Brāhmaṇas, to stand for the law of sacrifice, the general ethical principles seem to have suffered no set back.

Highest moral value has been attached to the vow of observing truth. "One law the gods observe — the Truth" (ētaḍ-dhavaī devā vrataṁ caranti yat satyam — I. 1, 1, 5) or "He who speaks the truth becomes glorious" (yaśo ha bhavati ya evaṁ vidvān satyaṁ vadati — I. 1, 1, 5) — such statements in the Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa easily show that truth-speaking was essentially a religious and moral duty. In another context, truthfulness has been identified with the worship of the consecrated fire: "whosoever speaks the truth, acts as if he sprinkled that lighted fire with ghee ..... and ever the more increases his own vital energy and day by day does he become better."<sup>25</sup> Truthfulness was even deemed as equal to godliness (Śatyameva devā anṛtaṁ manusyā idamaham anṛtāt satyam upaimīti tan manusyebhyo devān upaiti — I. 1, 1, 4). Knowledge was highly desirable; even in sacrificial performance, the proper knowledge of the significance of every detail, and not the mere performance, was necessary. Sometimes pure knowledge has been prized more than sacrificial fees (dakṣiṇā) or austerity (tapas).<sup>26</sup>

25. S. Br. II. 2, 2, 19: sa yaḥ satyaṁ vadati yathāgniṁ samiddhaṁ taṁ ghr̥tenābhisīced devaṁ hainaṁ sa uddīpayati tasya bhūyo bhūyo eva tejo bhavati ..... etc.

26. S. Br. X. 5, 4, 16.

In the midst of all sacrificial paraphernalia, the Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa has prescribed Sarvamedha or the sacrifice of all things as a means to attain spiritual freedom.<sup>27</sup> The people in general in that period used to abide by certain social ethics in their conduct, as far as possible. No one generally transgressed the established social order which was conducive to justice and welfare. The showing of respect towards the superiors was an established convention.<sup>28</sup> Guests were regarded as of high esteem, and hospitality to guests was an essential duty on the part of the house-holders. Most Brāhmaṇas prescribe an iṣṭi called the Ātithyeṣṭi which was performed in honour of King Soma conceived as an honourable guest. The Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa thinks that the guests are the most honourable, and special arrangements like the slaughtering of an ox or he-goat are to be made for the entertainment of a guest.<sup>29</sup> Eating on the part of a host before the guests had eaten has been censured.<sup>30</sup> The guests were to be fed with the same kind of food that the host took, irrespective of their class or social status.

The idea of sin or crime has not been much dealt with in the Brāhmaṇas. Yet, the conception of Varuṇa as the 'upholder of law' (V. 3, 3, 11) or the frequent mention of Varuṇa's noose or bonds which bind those who transgress Varuṇa's laws (VI.

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27. Ś. Br. XIII. 7, 1, 1.

28. Ś. Br. I. 1, 1, 11: adhastādiva hi śreyasaḥ upacāraḥ /

29. Ś. Br. III. 4, 1, 2.

30. Ś. Br. I. 1, 1, 8.

(Vi. 7, 3, 8) show that the idea of the punishment of wrong deeds was conspicuous by its presence. Specially, adultery was regarded as a grave sin against Varuṇa. But at the same time, it was their belief that confession of the sin, surely implying repentance might lessen the guilt. The confession of the wife in the Varuṇa-praghāsa ritual proves this.<sup>31</sup> The idea of Nirṛti is another conception which also shows the Vedic people's consciousness of sin. In the Vedic mythology Nirṛti is the goddess of evil. The Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa prescribes an offering to this deity at the time of the king's inauguration ceremony (VII. 4, 1, 27).

The overall aspect of culture of the Vedic people of the Brāhmanic age may also be noticed in their artistic attitude to life. The more they were settled in a stable life, the more they became devoted to the cultivation of art. We have already discussed about their proficiency in several branches of fine arts, such as music and dancing, sewing and weaving, ornamentation and architecture or in different kinds of crafts. The Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa attests to the fact that the Vedic ṛsis had a keen ear for music and they heard the musical notes of the sāma-chant in the sounds of rains.<sup>32</sup>

Chanting of Sāmans, sometimes accompanied by the beating of drums, formed an essential part of several sacrificial performances. Lute or Vīṇā was a popular instrument and it was looked upon as an embodiment of grace.<sup>33</sup> The rhythmic movements

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31. Ś. Br. II. 5, 2, 20.

32. Ś. Br. XI. 2, 7. 32.

33. Ś. Br. XIII. 1, 5, 3: Śriyai vā etad rūpaṁ yad vīṇā /

of dance also delighted their hearts.<sup>34</sup> Allegorical composition in Śātapatha Brāhmaṇa (XI. 6, 1,) or the highly dramatic piece containing the dialogue between Purūravas and Urvāśī (XI. 5, 1, 1ff.), not only proves the existence of different types of literary composition, but also points out the high intellect of the people. Their developed artistic sense is reflected also in their cultivation of the art of embroidery. Dress was, according to them, a man's outward appearance,<sup>35</sup> and embroidery did ornamentation of a dress. Ornaments of gold and silver used by the vedic people show that they learned the use of these metals not mainly for practical purpose; they at the same time acquired the greatest amount of accuracy and workmanship to design beautiful decoratives from various materials which may be regarded as works of art.

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34. They had the artistic mind to bring out a simile between the regular rotation of day and night and the rhythmic manner of dancing.

35. Ś. Br. XII. 4, 1, 15: rūpaṁ vā etat puruṣasya yaḍ vāsaḥ  
..... etc.

## CHAPTER VI

## Linguistic and Literary Value

## I

The language of the Vedic period represents the Old Indo-Aryan speech which was introduced in India along with the invading Aryans "sometime during the second half of the second millennium B.C."<sup>1</sup> The Vedic period extended over a long extent of time and 'in the course of its prolonged literary existence' the Vedic language underwent some important changes. Just as there was a continued progress of thought in the social, religious and cultural aspect, similarly in language we can trace a continued chronological progress through different stages. This chronological progress was marked by the adoption of new vocabulary or the change of meaning of the old terms, by the elimination of various alternative forms, and by the loss of significance on the part of accent or intonation. As Prof. Keith remarks "from the language of the R̥gveda we can trace a steady development to classical Sanskrit through the later Saṃhitās and the Brāhmaṇas."<sup>2</sup>

The Brāhmaṇas are, however, mainly written in prose. The Brāhmaṇic prose together with the prose of the Yajurveda

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1. Suniti Kumar Chatterjee in Cultural Heritage of India, Vol.I, p. 56.

2. History of Sanskrit Literature, p. 4.

and the Atharvaveda preserves the first specimen of Old Indo-Aryan prose. It represents the formal type of prose and naturally, it is free from much ambiguities of form which we notice in a considerable number in the versified language of the R.V. The language of the Brāhmaṇas, however, does not reflect any definite mode or form of any standardised style which we notice in the prose literature of the classical period. The chief aim of these books was to set forth the complicated details of the sacrifices along with the purpose of establishing the significance of the mantras. The difficulty of the subject-matter and the constantly monotonous effort to explain the mantras in connection with the rituals deprive the authors of the Brāhmaṇas much of their originality. The structure of sentences naturally lacks variety. The use of long series of short clauses, each complete with its finite verb, seems to be the normal practice with the Brāhmaṇic authors. Sometimes, complex sentences with a conditional meaning, are met with and make the language occasionally obscure. In spite of that, the language of the Brāhmaṇas is on the whole simple and lucid in comparison to the artifice of the later prose. Particularly the Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa, being later among the Brāhmaṇa-works, shows considerable ease of motion and dignity in its style of composition. Irrespective of other Brāhmaṇas, it has definitely a literary style which is simple and elegant at the same time.



Another characteristic of the Brāhmanical composition is that the authors of the Brāhmanas took delight in the narrative form of representation. Very often they indulged themselves in introducing a discourse in the form of a story written in more or less, Simple Sanskrit. On the whole, the prose of the Brāhmaṇa is of great historical interest, inasmuch as it marks the transition from the simple to the complex, from the natural to the artificial type of prose composition.

Though the Brāhmanic language is on the whole homogeneous, yet it should be remembered that every Brāhmaṇa has its own linguistic peculiarities. We here try to collect some of the peculiarities which the Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa reflects.

In the case of declension the Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa presents several peculiarities such as the substitution of the ending 'ai' for 'āḥ' in the ablative and genitive singular in case of feminine substantives ending in -ā, ū and ī. Such forms are totally absent in the Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa of the Kāṇva-recension but they increased in such proportion in the Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa of the Mādhyandina-recension that the normal forms became rare. Thus — ālabdhāyai for ālabdhāyāḥ in tasya ālabdhāyai sāvāg apacakrāma (I. 1, 4, 26); tasyai for tasyāḥ in tasyai garbhah papāta (I. 4, 5, 11).

The locative singular form of an-stems were very often endingless in the R.V., but in the Brāhmanic-prose

only the two words 'ahan' and 'atman' show the endless form. The Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa shows also the regular forms like ātmani, sāmani, ahani, ahni, etc.

Like the case-endings, the syntax of the case also sometimes presents some remarkable phenomena unknown in the Sāmhitā. The absolute use of the Nominative is such a thing, e.g. ātithyena vai devā istvā tām samad avindat "when the gods had performed the guest-offering discord befell them" (III. 4, 2, 1); osadhīr jagdhvāpah pītvā tata eṣa rasah sambhavanti "having consumed the plants and having drunk water this sap is generated" (I. 3, 1, 25). Really intransitive verb, governing the accusative, is another peculiar feature in the Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa, such as, sālam asurā āsan "the asuras remained at home" (VI. 8, 1, 1); rāstram eva te bhavanti "they possess a kingdom" (XIII. 1, 6, 3). The use of dative at the end of a sentence which is already complete in itself, is quite frequent in the Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa, e.g. tat paśūn evāsmā tat pari dadāti guptyai "in this way he intrusts the cattle to him in order to protect him" (II. 4, 1, 5); asmā ādityam yunakti svargasya lokasya samastyai "It is yonder sun he harnesses for him for the gaining of the heavenly world." (XII. 2, 6, 1). The additional and explanatory character of this final dative is much in accordance to the dative infinitive, and the use of such forms, forms a distinct feature of the style of the Brāhmaṇa. The use of double dative, the second being one of attraction

was noticed in the R.V. and continues also in the Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa, e.g. na vā eṣoḽam śriyai dhāranāya, "he is not equal to sustain distinction" (VIII. 6, 2, 1);

The use of the accusative forms in -tum as infinitives is rare in the R.V. but in the Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa such forms containing a verb of motion or in dependence on verbs meaning 'to wish', 'to be able' etc. are not infrequently used to supplement statements. The frequency of such forms may be a distinct sign of later style. For example — Viṣṇur na śaśāka samyantum "Viṣṇu was unable to control" (XIV. 1, 1, 6); ko hy etam arhaty abhyāroḍhum "for who is worthy of mounting beside him" (III. 3, 4, 9); ka u hy etam arhati pratyāvartayītum "who, forsooth, is able to turn him back" (XIII. 4, 2, 16).

The use of gerunds in -am can hardly be traced in the language of the R.V., but they have become common in the language of the Brāhmaṇas. The forms like — pāpa-vasyasaṁ kuryāt — "would cause confusion and lead to evil" (XII. 7, 3, 15) are frequently found in this Brāhmaṇa.

The use of words formed with the suffix -uka with the sense of a present participle as well as the infinitive use of forms in -toḥ in connection with the word īśvara are quite common in the Brāhmaṇas. The Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa also

contains a lot of such forms — rāstrameva viśi āhanti  
tasmāt rāstrī viśam ghātukah "royal power indeed presses  
hard on the people, whence the wielder of royal power is apt  
to strike down people". (XII. 2, 9, 6); rājā bāhuvalī  
bhāvukah "the king is sure to be strong in the arm".  
(XIII. 2, 2, 5).

Another characteristic expression of the Brāhmanas,  
is the use 'rupam kṛ' in the sense of 'to become'. In the  
Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa we get such instances as — sa yaddhim-  
karoti tad dhimkārasya rūpam kriyate "By his uttering 'Hin'  
the peculiar nature (rupam) of the word 'Hin' is produced"  
(I. 4, 1, 1); rajatam hiranyam darbhe pravadhya purastād  
dhartavai brūyāt tac candramaso rūpam kriyate "Having  
fastened a piece of white gold (silver) to a plant of darbha  
grass, let him order it to be taken towards the front; thus  
it is made of the form of the moon" (XII. 4, 4, 7).

The treatment of prepositions is a remarkable pheno-  
menon in the Vedic language and there the term may be used  
both in the sense of verbal prefixes and prefixes in con-  
nection with a case, nominal, pronominal and adjectival. The  
verbal prefixes are few in number in comparison to the other  
prefixes in connection with a case. Only five or six preposi-  
tions occur as verbal prefixes in the Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa (such  
as, ā, prati, anu, abhi, ati). The verbal prefixes are  
generally used to modify the meaning of the verbs but the

Vedic language shows a remarkable freedom in respect of their position. In some cases they are immediately followed by the verbs, but in many cases they are separated by intervening words. Examples in this respect are — pra me brūta bhāgadheyaṁ yathā (I. 5, 1, 26); antarikṣaṁ vā anu rakṣas' carati (I. 1, 2, 4).

The use of the second type of prefixes is more frequent in the Brāhmanic prose. All of them are not prepositions in the strict sense i.e. they are not always placed before a case. The same indeclinables are used both as prepositions and post-positions in the Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa:

adhi — adhi yoneḥ "from the origin" (VIII. 2, 2, 5);  
tapaso' dhi "after pain" (VI. 1, 3, 9); kṛṣṇā-  
jinam adhi "on the black antelope's skin" (I. 1, 4, 3).

abhi — vārsikam abhi "towards the rainy season" (V.  
 5, 2, 4); abhi dvidēvatyān "for the two deities"  
 (IV. 1, 5, 6).

ati — imāṁ llokān ati "beyond these worlds" (I. 2, 1, 12);  
atīmāṁ llokān "beyond these worlds" (XI. 1, 2, 8).

abhitah- yūpam abhitah "on both sides of the sacrificial  
 post" (XIII. 2, 6, 9); abhito'gnim "around the  
 fire" (I. 2, 5, 15).

Though in general, the prepositions and post-positions occur more or less equally in the language of the Brāhmaṇas, the Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa shows the predominance of post-positions

in comparison to the prepositions. The same tendency seems to reveal itself also in Classical Sanskrit and in modern Indo-Aryan languages. This perhaps indicates the later style of the Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa. Like the verbal prefixes, the other prepositions and post-positions are not always placed immediately before or after the case concerned. The intervention of particles or other parts of speech between the preposition and the case governed by it is very common in the Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa: yaṁ sarve anu paśavaḥ "whom all animals follow" (III. 8, 4, 1); bahirdhā taḍ agneḥ karisyāmaḥ "we will put it outside Agni" (VI. 8, 2, 1).

On the whole, the free position of the prepositions in the Vedic language makes this much clear that in the earliest language preposition was regarded as an independent entity and not a mere appendage to other words. The Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa retains this ancient trait of language to a certain extent.

In respect of verbal system also the language of the Brāhmaṇas in general reflect several special characteristics. In comparison to the R̥g V., the Brāhmaṇas show much precision in the use of tenses. Thus among the three past tenses, the aorist, originally used for describing an action which has just recently been completed, is now restricted only to the direct speech: sa hovāca nipalaśamiva vai me' vādīt "He said, 'she has only replied to me by shaking her head'" (III. 2, 1, 20); yasmai mām pitā adāt "to whom my father

has given me" (IV. 1, 5, 9); ko vo'dyeha kiñcidadrāksīt  
 "which of you has seen anything here this day?" (IV. 1, 5, 5)  
 etc. The imperfect, which was originally the simple past tense,  
 has now become the tense of narration: devā tān samādaṁvindat  
 "discord arose between them (the gods)" (III. 4, 3, 1); te  
devā vācamabruvan "the gods said to speech" (IV. 6, 7, 6);  
samvatsare hi prajāpatiḥ/udatiḥ "at the end of the year,  
 Prajāpati rose" (XI. 1, 6, 5).

The perfect also is frequently used as the narrative past in the Brāhmaṇas and the much more developed narrative style of the Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa may suggest a comparatively later period for its composition. Most probably, the perfect as a narrative tense is a case of borrowing from the style of the old Itihāsa literature. This is probably the reason why such legends as that of Purūravas and Urvāśī (XI. 5, 1) or Cyavana and Sukanyā (IV. 1, 5) should be told in perfects. Pāṇini's rule 'parokṣe liṭ' which bars the use of perfect in the first person is not applicable to the Brāhmaṇa prose. The use of the perfect as a present is another peculiar feature of the Brāhmaṇas of which the Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa gives abundant instances. The periphrastic with √kṛī as auxiliary is common in the Brāhmaṇas,<sup>3</sup> but with √as and √bhū such forms are extremely rare, though Classical Sanskrit has all the three forms. Periphrastic future forms like 'nirvoḍhā', 'pārayitā', 'āgantā' also are not rare.

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3. cf. āradhayām cakāra -II. 2,4,6 ; devāḥkṣām cakīre -  
 III. 2,1,22 ; vidām cakāra -IV. 1,5,5 ; bibhayām cakruḥ -  
 IV. 6,6,1.

The modal system of the Brāhmaṇas also reflects some development. The injunctive is restricted practically to prohibitive constructions with mā and the loss of augment became a characteristic in such cases as in the classical language. For example — mā himsīh "do not hurt" (III. 6, 4, 14), mā lekhīh "do not graze" (Ibid.); mā .... udakam -antaschaitṣīt "let not the water cut thee off" (I. 8, 1, 6). The subjunctive is used usually in the first person, denoting either resolve or desire or some condition. The subjunctive form in the sentence — devanyajanaṁ tac candramasi nidadhāmahai "Come, let us remove to the moon the place of worship" (I. 2, 5, 18) is an instance of desire or resolve, while the use of the subjunctive in yanna avedisaṁ tena ahimsisaṁ "Because I knew thee not, therefore have I offended thee" (IV. 1, 5, 7) is conditional.

#### Use of Accent :

The system of accentuation is an important feature in the language of the Veda. All of the Saṁhitās have a three-fold system of accent, viz. udātta, anudātta and svarita, depending mainly on pitch. With the gradual development of language, the importance of accent began to fade out and excepting the two Brāhmaṇas of the Yajurveda (viz. the Taittirīya and the Śatapatha) no other Brāhmaṇa-work is marked with accent. Of them, the Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa again reveals a unique character as it has only two accents, viz.



udātta (the acute) and anudātta (the grave) and no svarita at all. The text of the Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa shows the udātta left unmarked and the anudātta marked with a horizontal stroke below the syllable.

The accentuation-system of the Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa shows some peculiar features or rather changes in comparison with that of the Yajurveda Saṃhitā to which it belongs. The Bhāṣika-sūtra of Kātyāyana has noted these features and the rules of accentuation-system of Brāhmaṇas as pointed out in the Bhāṣika-sūtra seem to be corroborated also by oral tradition. The main peculiarities in this Brāhmaṇa are noted below:

In the Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa the udātta syllable of the Saṃhitā has been generally treated as an anudātta while the anudātta syllable of the Saṃhitā becomes an udātta one. For example:

omāsas' carsaṇī-dhr̥to viśve devāsa āgata / dāśvāmsō  
dāśusaḥ sutam / upayāmagh̥ito'si viśvebhyas tvā  
devebhya esa te yonir viśvebhyas tvā devebhyaḥ / —  
as quoted in Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa (IV. 3, 1, 27). It has been  
read in the Śukla Yajurveda (VII. 33) with the following  
accents :

omāsas' carsaṇī-dhr̥to viśve devāsa āgata / dāśvāmsō  
dāśusaḥ sutam / upayāmagh̥ito'si viśvebhyas tvā  
devebhyaḥ / esa te yonir viśvebhyas tvā devebhyaḥ /

But when an udātta syllable occurs at the end of a pāda or

sentence in the Saṁhitā-text, it does not become an anudātta in the Brāhmaṇa, e.g. cakṣurmitrasya varuṇasyāgneḥ (IV. 3, 4, 10) for cakṣurmitrasya varuṇasyāgneḥ (YV. VII. 42);

Another peculiarity noted in the Brāhmaṇa is that all kinds of Svaritas viz. jātya, abhiniḥita, kṣaipra and prasliṣṭa, occurring in the Saṁhitā are changed to udātta here. For example, dhānyamasi (I. 2, 1, 18) as against dhānyamasi (YV, I. 20).

Such kind of change in the nature of accent may be peculiar to the Brāhmaṇical accentology, but possibly it is nothing unnatural. Just as we notice change in the form of language from period to period, similarly the change in the nature of accent in a language may be a matter of natural development. The change from a three-fold accentuation system to a two-fold system gradually led to further modification and finally resulted in the complete loss of accent in the post-Vedic language. Particularly, the change in the nature of accent as noticed in the Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa may be due to the characteristics of the eastern dialects. Yājñavalkya, the author of the Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa is believed to have belonged to Videha and scholars agree that the composition of this Brāhmaṇa-work took place somewhere in the eastern part of the country. The shifting of the Aryans from their original land i.e. the land of Saptasindhu to the eastern part of India is an important matter since it caused some radical changes in their language. The tonal difference due to

regional variation is an established fact and the accent-variation in the Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa depends mainly on the tonal difference. The mode of recitation among the easterners differed from that of the other parts of the country and this probably contributed towards dropping of the old scheme of rigidity in the accentuation system of the Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa.

Some observations of the Ś. Br. on Speech :

The importance of the Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa from the linguistic point of view is not only because it represents the earliest stage of Indo-European prose, but also because it contains several important observations on speech in general. It has spoken of two types of speech i.e. Vāk, viz. the divine and the human. The divine Vāk consists of the Vedic texts i.e. the R̥k-verses, the Yajus texts and the Sāman hymns, while the human speech represents the form of speech other than the Vedic texts used by priests or their attendants in the manner of conversation at sacrifices.<sup>4</sup> Human form of speech again consists of two varieties — one accompanied by accurate accent and the other without such accents known respectively as 'faltering' and 'unfaltering.' The sacrificer consecrated to the Soma sacrifice was expected to speak his speech falteringly and not after the manner of ordinary speech.<sup>5</sup> The Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa has further

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4. Ś. Br. X. 5, 1, 1: vācā hi cīyate r̥cā yajusā sāmneti nu  
daivyātha yan manusya vācā hetīdām kuruta idām kuruteti /
5. Ś. Br. III. 2, 2, 27: parihvālaṁ vācaṁ vadati, na  
mānuṣīm prasṛtām /

made distinction between the articulate speech of human beings and the inarticulate sound of beasts, birds and reptiles by using the two terms 'niruktaṃ' and 'aniruktaṃ' respectively.<sup>6</sup>

The Śātapatha Brāhmaṇa seems to have noticed also the dialectical varieties of different parts of the countries. The variation in the pronunciation of the same term caused by the difference of regional influence, has been illustrated in the Śātapatha Brāhmaṇa with reference to the term Agni.<sup>7</sup> The language of the two states Kuru and Pāñcāla, has been specially praised because of their purity and perfection. Such pure speech has been termed Pathyā Svasti in the Brāhmaṇas and the Śātapatha Brāhmaṇa observes that North was the seat of this Pathyā Svasti : "Pure Speech (Pathyā Svasti) discerned the Northern language; hence the peoples of Kuru-Pāñcālās speak the pure language".<sup>8</sup> Speech has also been often termed Vāk or Sarasvatī in the Brāhmaṇas<sup>9</sup> and here we have a distinct trace of growing concept of Sarasvatī as Vāgdevī or goddess of Speech.

In the Brāhmaṇas we also notice some observations on the coherence between the mind and speech. The Śātapatha

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6. Ś. Br. IV. 1, 3, 16: vāco niruktaṃ yaṃ manuṣyā vadanti ... aniruktaṃ yat paśavo vadanti, aniruktaṃ yad vayāmsi vadanti ... aniruktaṃ yadidaṃ kṣudraṃ sarīsrpaṃ vadati /

7. Ś. Br. I. 7, 3, 8

8. Ś. Br. III. 2, 3, 15: udīcīmeva diśam / pathyayā svastyā prājānaṃ stasmādatrottaraḥi vāg vadati kurupañcālātrā /

9. Ś. Br. VII. 5, 1, 31: Vāk Sarasvatī / Also XI. 2, 4, 9.

Brāhmaṇa has observed that mind is always more comprehensive than speech, because mind is unlimited, while speech is limited.<sup>10</sup> Elsewhere, mind is said to be indistinct while speech is distinct or expressive.<sup>11</sup>

### Etymology :

The practice of giving derivations or etymologies is a favourite device with the authors of the Brāhmaṇas. The germ is to be found in the Sāṃhitās, and there the etymologies are straight-forward explanation of a term without much depending on its grammatical or philological basis. In the Brāhmaṇas, however, etymology plays a great part and the Brāhmaṇas themselves show definite traces of much speculation over this process. Unlike the simply sense-giving explanation of a term in the R.V., etymology in the Brāhmaṇas has grown up to be a terminology with some definite method, intended for some definite purpose. Indeed, the derivations in some of the Brāhmaṇas remind us of the developed system of later philological works like Yāska's Nirukta.

Generally, the etymologies occur in Brāhmaṇas in connection with their respective topics of discourse. Consequently, most of the derivations in the Brāhmaṇas have a sort of ritualistic colouring. The Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa is, however,

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10. Ś. Br. I. 4, 4, 7: aparimitatarambiva hi manah parimita-tareva hi vāk /

11. aniruktaṃ hi manah - Ś. Br. I. 4, 4, 5.  
niruktā hi vāk - Ś. Br. I. 4, 4, 6.

an exception, since it contains large numbers of derivations of secular words. The derivations of words like 'abhra', from ap (water) with  $\sqrt{\text{bhr}}$  in the sense of cloud or 'avi' from  $\sqrt{\text{av}}$  'to protect' in the sense of 'earth, the sustainer' or varṣā from vr̥ṣ 'to rain' in the sense of 'rainy season' are essentially non-ritualistic. Sometimes a word having an ordinary meaning has been derived in the context of some divine myth. For example, the word 'asvattha' which is the name of a particular kind of tree, has been derived from asva (horse) and  $\sqrt{\text{sthā}}$  (to stay) and it has been conceived as the abode of Prajāpati disguised as a horse. Narration of a myth in order to establish a word with a particular meaning is a common practice in the Brāhmaṇas. The Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa contains numerous instances of which only a few are referred to here. The word 'vedī' which means 'sacrificial altar' has been derived from  $\sqrt{\text{vid}}$  'to get' and the myth narrated in this connection in the Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa runs thus — The gods and the Asuras, both offsprings of Prajāpati, set on dividing this earth, but the Asuras wanted to give to the gods only as much ground as Viṣṇu might lie upon. Viṣṇu, however, was sacrifice itself and by it the gods obtained the entire earth. Again the meaning of the word 'adhvara' as 'sacrifice' derived from  $\sqrt{\text{dhurv}}$  'to injure' has been expressed in mythological language — when the gods were engaged in sacrificing their rivals, the Asuras, wished to injure them; but though desirous of injuring them, they were

unable to injure them and were foiled; for this reason the sacrifice is called adhvara.

The tendency to use a word having an ordinary meaning to signify some philosophical truth is often found in the Brāhmaṇas, particularly in the Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa. In doing so, the author of the Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa has often invented new etymologies to suit the context. For instance, the word *puruṣa*, meaning ordinarily a male person, has been elevated to a philosophical term meaning 'vāyu', the 'prāṇa' or 'ātman' living in the physical world, from *puram* with  $\sqrt{\text{śi}}$  'to lie down' : ime vai lokā purayameva puruṣo'yaṃ pavate so' syāṃ puri śete tasmāt puruṣaḥ (XIII. 6, 2, 1). Similarly the word *yajus*, originally a *yaju* verse derived from  $\sqrt{\text{yaj}}$  'to sacrifice', has been used with a new significance to mean *Puruṣa* or *Prāṇa* i.e. the All-uniting, all-connecting and all-pervading Reality, derived from  $\sqrt{\text{yuj}}$  'to unite': yajuriti-yeṣa (puruṣaḥ) hīdaṃ sarvaṃ yunakti (X. 5, 2, 20).

Many of the derivations in the Brāhmaṇas appear to be absurd at the first side, while some again appear to be only an attempt to somehow connect phonetically a particular word with a particular meaning. In the former case, the absurdity mostly seems to be due to the reference to some background myth or legend. Thus, the word 'āsmā' which means 'cloud' has been connected with *asru* 'tears', though phonetically

aśman cannot be regarded as the variant of 'aśru'. The reason rests in a myth which tells us that when Prajāpati desired to reproduce Himself through union with the air, thence an egg arose. And the tear which formed itself became variegated pebble (aśman); for 'aśru' indeed is what they mystically call 'aśman', for the gods love the mystic.<sup>12</sup> Likewise, the derivation of soma from 'svā' and 'me' (svā vai ma'eṣeti tasmāt somo nāma — III. 9, 4, 22) seems to be absurd, but it has been justified with reference to the myth that Soma once refused to become the sacrificial food for the gods with his whole self, and put aside his own form, but later he drew it to himself saying 'that is mine own' (svā me); hence the name Soma. Such types of apparently absurd derivations are not rare in the Brāhmaṇas. The attempt to somehow draw a phonetic connection is noticed mostly in the derivation of the names of some gods or things. In such cases, the epithets which at first denoted some particular quality or activity, have been intended to signify the proper names themselves. Thus the word 'Āditya' derived from ā-dā (to take) has been used to signify the Sun in the sense of 'he who takes away the lights of the stars' : teṣām (nakṣatrāṇām) eṣa ādityaḥ udyanneva vīryaṁ kṣatra-mādatte tasmādadityo nāma (II. 1, 2, 18). The derivation of the word 'Indra', the most prominent god of the Vedic pantheon, is still, more interesting. It has

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12. Ś. Br. VI. 1, 2, 3: yadaśru saṁ kṣaritamāsīt so'śmā  
praśnirabhavaśru haivaitamasmetyācakṣate paroḁsaṁ  
paroḁsakāmā hi devāḥ /



been said to be an evolute of 'Indha' from /indh 'to kindle' :  
sa yo'yaṁ madhye prāṇaḥ / esa evendrastāṇesa prāṇān madhyata  
indriyenainddha tasmādinḍha / indho ha vai tamindra ityācaksate  
parokṣaṁ parokṣakāmā hi devāḥ / (VI. 1, 1, 2).<sup>13</sup> Similar type  
of derivation is met with in the case of the word Agni which  
is supposed to be an evolute of agri < agr-i. The etymology  
suggested in the Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa presupposed the essential  
trait of Vedic Agni as the first created among the gods:

(a) sa yadasya sarvasyāgramasrjyata tasmād-agrirgrirha  
vaitamagnirityācaksate parokṣaṁ parokṣakāmā hi devaḥ (VI.  
1, 1, 11)

(b) tadvā enametodagre devānāmajanayata / tasmādagri-  
ragrirha vai nāmaitadyad agniriti sajjātaḥ / pūrvah preyāya  
yo vai pūrva etygra'etiti vai tamāhuḥ so' evāsyagnitā /  
(II. 2, 4, 2).

In many cases the Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa has suggested  
different etymologies of the same word. For example, the  
word Yajus in the sense of a yaju formula is derived from  
/yaḥ 'to sacrifice' : 'yajo ha vai nāmaitad yad yajuriti  
(IV. 6, 7, 13). In another context the Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa has  
suggested a new derivation of yajus from /yā 'to move' and  
/jan 'to create' in the sense of that which creates power:  
esa hi yannevedaṁ sarvaṁ janayatyetam yantamidam anu-  
prajāyate tasmādvāyureva yajuh (X. 3, 5, 1). A third

13. Cf. Nir. X. 1, 8: prāṇaiḥ samaindhastasmā-dindrasya  
indratvam /

derivation of yajus from  $\sqrt{\text{juj}}$  'to unite' in the sense of the all-connecting and all-pervading Reality has already been referred to.

## II

### Literary Value

The Brāhmaṇas are generally regarded as highly important from the view-point of the history of religion and priesthood, but as literary compositions they have been often looked down upon by great scholars like Max Muller and Winternitz. Max Müller, with all his high regard for the ancient oriental literature, gives the following literary estimate of the Brāhmaṇas — "The Brāhmaṇas represent, no doubt, a most interesting phase in the history of the Indian mind, but judged by themselves, as literary productions, they are most disappointing. No one would have supposed that at so early a period, and in so primitive a state of society, there could have risen up a literature which for pedantry and downright absurdity can hardly be matched anywhere." But judged from modern outlook, the old scholar seems to have done injustice to the Brāhmaṇas by denying them totally of any literary importance. It is true that the Brāhmaṇas as a class of works devoted to the exposition of the details of sacrifices cannot claim much literary value, yet a deeper study would reveal that they are not totally devoid of literary interest. They preserve traces of various types of literary compositions of which the Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa shows acquaintance

with Gāthā-Nārāsaṁsī, Anusāsanāni, Itihāsa-purāṇa, Vākovakya and Anvākhyāna. These items together with the Trayī Vidyā (i.e. the three-fold knowledge of the ~~Ṛg~~ <sup>14</sup>verses, the yajus formulae and the sāman chants<sup>14</sup>) formed the Vedic study in those days. Of these terms, the word Gāthā refers to couplets recounting the glorious deeds of kings, priests and other human beings and Vākovākya, also called Brahmodya, is a kind of theological riddle in the form of dialogue. Besides these two forms of composition, we mainly get various types of narratives, stories and legends under the heading Itihāsa, Purāṇa or Anvākhyāna.

In the Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa we get a rich treasure of narratives, myths or legends which may very well be the precursor of the later short stories or fables as a form of subsequent literary growth. Some of these legends are based and developed on the original Ṛgvedic kernel, while others are independently imported from floating traditions. In the first category are included the legends describing the conflict of Indra with Vṛtra and Indra's subsequent victory (I. 6, 3, 1f.) or the old myth of Prajāpati's lust for his own daughter (II. 1, 2, 8) or again the story of Purūravas and Urvaśī (XI. 5, 1), while the legends like those of Manu and the fish (I. 8, 1, 1f.) or the Cyavana and Sukanyā (IV. 1, 5, 9) or the legend of Videgha Mātava carrying Agni to the eastern region (I. 4, 1, 10), belong to the post-Samhitā period.

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14. S. Br. IV, 6, 7, 1: trayī vai vidyā ico yajūṁsi sāmāni /

Moreover, numerous legends are found in the Brāhmanas, depicting the contests between the gods (Devas) and the Demons (Asuras). Prajāpati, who has been highly elevated in the Brāhmanas, has become the source of both the gods and the demons. The legends always end with the victory of the gods and the complete submission of the demons. There are some other stories in the Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa which tell us how the gods attained their divine qualities and became what they are now. Such legends are surely significant in a way, since they are meant to show that in a conflict between the good and the bad, between the moral and immoral, those who stick to the right path ultimately win victory over those who are the reverse. The attainment of godhead by some particular means may also signify that even the mortals who take to the path followed by the gods may attain divinity.

The most important and interesting thing to be mentioned in connection with these legends is that all stories in <sup>the</sup> Brāhmanas are narrated in a sacerdotal background. Directly or otherwise, they are connected with sacrifice; some of them are introduced to explain the origin of some matter. There are other legends which are set forth to explain the significance of some particular rite.

Together with such types of legends, the Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa also contains several creation-legends which are of great cosmogonical significance. In the majority of such

legends Prajāpati is the source of creation from whence the world and the beings are all originated. These legends begin in the same way by relating that Prajāpati, desirous of having descendants, prepared himself for the great work of creation by means of self-torture and mortification. But in the actual narration of the creation, the legends seem to contain diversified events. Thus, in one legend (II. 2, 4), Agni is said to have been produced first, then the sun and the wind along with plants arose. In another legend (II. 5, 1, 1-3), Prajāpati is said to have brought forth creatures, first the birds, then the small creeping things and then the snakes. But these creatures did not live long for lack of food and then Prajāpati created new beings with breasts full of milk. Again, another legend of the Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa (VII. 5, 2, 6) narrates that Prajāpati created beings out of his vital organs: out of his mind he created man, out of his eye the horse, out of his breath the cow, out of his ear the sheep, out of his voice the goat.

But it is not that all the creation-legends of the Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa conceive Prajāpati as the early creator. There are legends where Prajāpati himself is regarded as created and the work of creation is said to have taken place from the primeval water. Still more interesting is the legend which describes the creation beginning with the non-existent (asat),<sup>15</sup> ultimately establishes the Brahman or the three-fold

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15. S. Br. VI. 1, 1, 1 ff.

knowledge as the foundation of all. Brahman as an entity is stated more clearly as the creator of all in another legend: "In the beginning there was here only the Brahman. This created the gods and after it had created the gods, it gave them these worlds as dwellings."<sup>16</sup>

Some legends in the Brāhmanas are moral tales in the sense that they try to glorify virtues like satya (truth), ahimsā (non-violence) or tapaḥ (toil). As for instance, a story in the Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa (IX, 5, 1, 16f.) narrates that the Asuras who held fast to untruth thrived and became very prosperous while the gods who were prone to truth became very poor and contemptible. But finally, it was the gods who attained victory by performing sacrifices. Such tales have an exemplary character as they are meant to show that those who are truthful must win at the end. The Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa also preserves traces of allegorical writings of which a fine example is the legend narrating the dispute between Mind and Speech, <sup>who</sup> both claiming superiority, went to appeal to Prajāpati for his decision. Prajāpati, however, decided in favour of Mind. (I. 4, 5, 8-12).

So far we have tried to make an assessment of the literary value of the Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa from the aspect of the various types of literary forms referred to therein. The

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16. S. Br. XI. 2, 3, 1: brahma vā idamagra āsīt / taddevā-  
nasrjata tad devān sṛṣṭaiṣu lokesu vyārohayaṭ ..... /

emergence of so many varieties of literary forms including laudatory verses of human beings (gāthā), philosophical riddles, allegorical and moral tales, different kinds of legends and myths, makes us sure about the creative activity of the Vedic authors. But the literary importance of the Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa depends not only on the different forms of literature recorded there; it itself has a special value as a literary work. We find here the language and literature of the early Saṃhitās attaining a remarkable development. The language is wonderfully simple, yet forceful. It is characterised by perfect rhythm, spontaneity and sonority. There is no lack of fine imageries. Symbolism plays here a great part. The following passage is an instance of the symbolism of figures through which fire-altar has been endowed with the greatness of Agni: "With four (verses) he takes (some of the ashes); he thereby supplies him (Agni) with four-footed animals; and animals being food, it is with food he thus supplies him. With three (verses) he takes (the ashes) down (to the water) — that makes seven, for of seven layers consists the fire-altar, seven seasons are a year, and the year is Agni; as great as Agni is, as great as his measure, so great does this become."<sup>17</sup>

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17. Ś. Br. VI. 8, 2, 7: caturbhirapādante / tadye catuspādāḥ  
 paśavas|taire-vainametāt sambharatya-tho'annam vai paśavo!  
 nnaivai~~as~~nametat sambharati tribhira bhyavaharati  
 tat sapta saptacitiko'guḥ sapta'rtavaḥ saṃvatsaraḥ  
 saṃvatsaro'gnir yāvānagnir yā-vatyasya mātṛā tāvat  
 tad bhavati /

The imagery of the sacrificial altar as a woman is an instance where we get the ancient ideal of feminine beauty: "It (the altar) should be broader on the west side, contracted in the middle and borrowed again on the east side; for thus shaped they praise a woman 'broad about the hips, somewhat narrower between the shoulders, and contracted in the middle (or about the waist)".<sup>18</sup> Like symbolizing, comparison or rather complete identification also plays a great part here. Almost on every page of the Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa we find association or identification between two dissimilar objects. The following is a single instance in this respect: "Now the sacrifice is the man. The sacrifice is the man for the reason that the man spreads (performs) it; and that in being spread it is made of exactly the same extent as the man."<sup>19</sup>

Judged from the point of view of their influence on later literature, the Brāhmaṇical stories show much importance. The best example is the old myth of Purūravas and Urvaśī which later formed the subject-matter of the famous drama of Kālidāsa, the Vikramorvaśīyam. The legends like Manu and the Fish, or Viṣṇu assuming the form of a dwarf<sup>(I, 2, 5, 1)</sup>, or Viṣṇu in the form of a boar uplifting the earth<sup>(XIV, 1, 2, 11)</sup> are definitely the basis of some of the incarnation-legends of later times. The creation-legends

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18. S. Br. I. 2, 5, 16: sā vai paścād varīyasī syāt / madhye saṁhvāritā punaḥ purastād urvyevamiva hi yoṣāṁ praśaṁsanti prṭhuśroṇir vimṛṣṭāntarām-sā madhye / saṁgrāhyeti /
19. S. Br. I. 3, 2, 1: puruṣo vai yajñah / puruṣa stena yajño yadenam puruṣastanuta eṣa vai tāyamāno yāvāneva puruṣastā-vān vidhīyate /



together with the legends of different kinds of origin, sacrificial and non-sacrificial, and also of the conflict between the gods and the demons later contributed some of the source materials of a special type of literature called the Purāṇas or Ākhyānas.

### C o n c l u s i o n

We have tried so far to stress in the preceding chapters the results of our investigation by marshalling of facts on the major aspects of the Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa. It has been stated at the outset that the Vajurveda-Saṁhitā, and particularly one of its Brāhmaṇa-counterparts, the Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa, contain a plethora of facts about sacrificial ritual as a highly developed cult of sacerdotalism. In the context of such background, the formal aspect of religion cannot but assume a great momentum, extending its impact on various socio-cultural traits. Sacrifice as the dominant cult, shaped and modulated the concept and pattern of social and allied behaviour, and it has been our present task to follow, in the preceding discourse, the trails of such developments. In the present concluding remarks, we need not sum up them for the risk of repetition. It should, however, be mentioned that the Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa does not directly deal with socio-political or different such other aspects of life, except by way of incidental references, and from those references we have deduced observations as objectively as possible.

We have traced in brief the evolution of sacrifice as a phase of religion. The Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa recounts legends to consolidate the germs of sacrificial religion. But in the history of this religion as we gather from this Brāhmaṇa, there is lurking from time to time a quest for

spiritual truth. This possibly makes room for truth, knowledge and reverence as we find in the symbolic rituals of the Āraṇyaka tradition leading to their <sup>fl</sup>eflorescence in the Upaniṣads.

Theology and the position of gods have acquired a very interesting feature of importance in the Brāhmaṇa we have studied. And this has been elaborately and critically discussed as far as possible and from different angles of approach. Attention has also been focussed on different characteristics of the gods as revealed in the Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa, affording scope for comparison wherever needed.

The dominance of the cult of sacrifice is intimately connected with the importance of priestcraft which in this age attained added honour and dignity rendering great religious service to the people. We have seen how with the growth of the rituals with their different ramifications and processing in the matter of observances, the number of the priests increased to a great extent. Priests as a custodian of the master-key of sacrifice and the sacrificial lore, were looked upon as gods in the human world. Though priestcraft in the age of the Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa seems to be hereditary, the priests enjoyed a place of honour in the society, particularly because they were devoted to the Vedic study and fulfilled high ideals. The function of the Purohita for a king or the Royal Priest in ancient India has its

different history and it has been shown in the light of the Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa that the Purohita, in addition to his duty of religious rites, was also empowered to advise the king on matters of socio-political issues. The different types of priests and their associates, their functions and characteristics, as we have discussed, lead us to believe that there was a good deal of scholasticism associated with the lore of sacrifice, and the sacrifice was like a great operational process, depending upon a host of paraphernalia and techniques to be attended to by a band of skilled priests and any default in the process was viewed as a ground of vitiating the rewards of sacrifice aspired for.

In the critical assessment on the basis of the data of geographical, social and other cultural importance as have been presented in the last few chapters, it appears that the Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa bears out an important landmark of growing civilization of ancient India, extending from the tract of the 'Saptasindhu' to the eastern region. The class-division of society into four-fold groups, namely, the Brāhmaṇa, the Kṣatriya, the Vaiśya and the Sūdra, as well as their avocations, status and relative position, seem to be well-settled institutions. The status of the Sūdra, however, was very low, having no right to initiation and sacrifice and we have presented a compact sociological study on all these points.

The sacredness of conjugal life as already indicated in the Rgvedic hymns was maintained intact in the age of the

Śātapatha Brāhmaṇa. The elevating note of the Śātapatha Brāhmaṇa exquisitely visualizes the relation of the married couple. We feel tempted even to repeat it : "Truth is male, faith is female; mind is husband, speech is wife; wherever the husband is, there is the wife too." (vr̥ṣā satyam yoṣā śraddhā, vr̥ṣā mano yoṣā vāk, yatraiva patistatra jāyā — XIII. 8, 2, 6).

The caste-system in this age did not, however, as we have indicated, prove a taboo for intercaste marriage, particularly in the descending scheme.

It is noticeable that the position of the women as compared with that of the R̥gveda underwent a state of decline in dignity. The point has been discussed as far as possible. What we like to emphasize is that in spite of certain uncharitable remarks about women in this Brāhmaṇa, the moral standard of conduct on the part of women was not so bad as already indicated. In the scheme of education, upanayana as an initiation-ceremony had great significance. The Śātapatha Brāhmaṇa gives us details about the rites and duties of religious students, and the Vedic study in the scheme necessarily involves the study of its exegesis and several other allied sciences as well. The Śātapatha Brāhmaṇa attests also to the educational debates and disputes and all these points have been critically discussed.

Agricultural, pastoral and commercial pursuits of diverse nature as revealed in this Brahmana help us to conclude that the Vedic society in that age attained a state of considerable advancement in economic conditions and there was, in full swing, the development of different specialised branches of arts, crafts, including architecture and even medical profession. The use of coins, balances and standard of measurement as indicated before, bears eloquent testimony to the development of trade and commerces.

In the narrative of cultural condition we have seen to what extent the king as the upholder of the state was held in high esteem in the society. The relation of the king and his subjects was like that of father and son and much emphasis is laid on the discretion of the people about selection of the king, though kingship was ordinarily hereditary. The glaring observation of the Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa, namely, "It is the people that creates the nobility" (viśa eva tat ksātram janayati — XII. 7, 3, 8) is a great pointer in this regard. We have also shed light on spiritual philosophy and the process of its evolution from the cult of sacrifice leading towards a renaissance in the Upaniṣads. It is also interesting to note that the Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa contains the germs of different later Indian philosophical thoughts. The philosophy of life in terms of duty, truthfulness, purity, non-violence and charity etc. is also elevating indeed.

In the just preceding chapter, linguistic peculiarities of the Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa have been indicated together with an appraisal of literary merit. All these show that the language and the literature of the early Saṃhitā reach here remarkable phase of progress. The touches of imageries, spontaneity, rhythm, sonorousness and instances of symbolism found in the Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa seem to indicate marks of progress in the literary style of prose.

In short, the Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa, from the study presented here in the preceding pages, is a great and significant landmark of social, cultural, religious and literary traits of the age with which it was associated.

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'A'

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